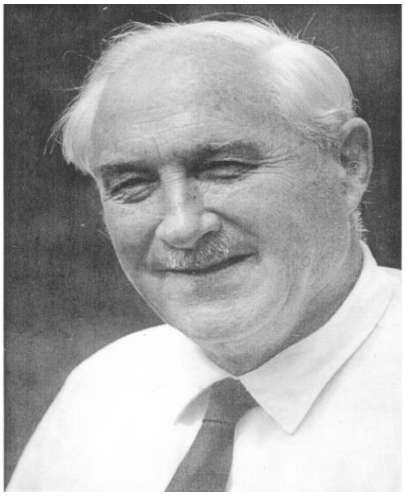
The Southern Kikuyu before 1903



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Foreword

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This study of the Kikuyu people as they were in the past is being published forty years after the manuscript was completed and four years after Louis' death. That it has finally seen the light of day is due to the dedication and unremitting hard work of my sister-in-law Gladys Beecher and of Jean Ensminger, now a postgraduate student of anthropology at Northwestern University, to whom both my sons and I are deeply grateful.

In spite of his absorbing interest in the prehistory of East Africa Louis had long been interested in recording the customs of the Kikuyu people since he had been brought up among them and knew their language as he did English. He also felt the urgency of recording their traditional customs for the benefit of their descendants before contact with Europeans had altered them beyond recognition.

This project was made possible during 1937 by an unexpected two-year grant from the Rhodes Trust, in Oxford. Louis had some hesitation in accepting, since he was deeply involved with prehistoric research, but the opportunity seemed too good to miss and was unlikely ever to be repeated. Accordingly, we moved to Kenya and after a preliminary stay with Chief Koinange at Kiambaa, not far from Nairobi, where Louis negotiated with councils of elders, we settled into camp at Nakuru, 100 miles north of Nairobi. Louis was accompanied by two Kikuyu elders who had been designated to give him information; while he worked with them I excavated a Neolithic site.

The methods Louis used to record the mass of information he obtained and to check and verify it are described in his Preface. It was a gargantuan task, if it was to be carried out with the thoroughness and attention to detail that Louis considered essential. The work finally ran into three volumes and amounted to 650,000 words. Louis steadfastly refused to abbreviate the manuscript and insisted that it should be published *in toto* or not at all. This led to it being rejected by a number of publishers who would have been willing to publish a shorter version.

The manuscript was stored away for years when some parts were lost and some destroyed by insects. During this time Louis made spasmodic attempts to find a publisher but it was not until 1968 that negotiations with an East African press promised success. These negotiations also broke

down in the end, and eventually Academic Press undertook publication. Louis then began revising the manuscript with the assistance of Jean Ensminger, who was considering taking up anthropology as a career when she returned to U.S.A.

When he died in 1972, Louis had revised some chapters but by far the greater part had to be corrected and reorganised before the manuscript could be published. I then approached my sister-in-law Gladys Beecher and we agreed that the work could not be submitted to the publishers until the Kikuyu words and phrases had been corrected for spelling and checked by someone with her expert knowledge of the language. Gladys most kindly undertook to tackle this aspect of the work, but at the time, neither she nor I had any conception of the monumental task ahead of her. As it turned out, not only was her familiarity with the Kikuyu language of inestimable value, but her knowledge of botany enabled her to check and correct the names of plants and trees used by the Kikuyu for ceremonial and other purposes.

Jean Ensminger was still in East Africa at this time and continued to work on some chapters of the book, but we realised that to reorganise, correct and retype the whole manuscript would require at least six months. Jean most generously agreed to devote her time to the work and delay her postgraduate study for one year, provided she could receive a minimal subsistence allowance. This was made possible by the kindness of the L.S.B. Leakey Foundation, of Pasadena, California, who voted a grant to assist both Gladys and Jean. In fact, Jean did not complete the correcting and typing for just over one year.

It gives me immense pleasure to see this work in print; I believe it to be one of the best studies Louis ever carried out and I know that its eventual publication was one of his most cherished ambitions. I thank most warmly Gladys Beecher, Jean Ensminger and all those who helped them to bring it to fruition.

M. D. Leakey
June 1977

Editors' Preface

p. vii-ix

In this book Dr Leakey tried, with the help of his committees of Kikuyu elders, to paint a complete picture of life as it was lived in South Kikuyu country in the last century. His picture is of a tribe living, as doubtless many other tribes did, within its own area, very much to itself, and with few outside contacts.

Within the tribe, so long as it kept to itself, everyone was provided for in one way or another. Individuality was discouraged. There were rules and regulations governing every aspect of life and the rules had to be obeyed. Those who kept all the rules were good and righteous, and those who broke them were evil, as they might bring ceremonial uncleanness and bad luck to their families by so doing. Purification ceremonies were frequently performed to put right anything that had gone wrong, and law breakers were heavily fined. A habitual offender, however, could not be tolerated and became an outcast.

The detailed rules of behaviour are set out in this book. The countryside is described and the daily avocations of its people—digging, planting, harvesting, clearing new ground when this was necessary, the care of flocks and herds, the planning and building of homesteads, tribal raiding, trading, marriage, dancing and the administration of justice. All these are set out along with customs connected with sex, clothing and food, and the ceremonies performed in connection with

rites de passage, when a person, or group of persons, passed from one stage of life to the next, and took on a new set of responsibilities. The old Kikuyu religious beliefs are described too and the work of medicine-men, both in making magic and in dealing with sickness. The overall picture is of people going about their business in a community that provided everyone with a place and an occupation, and that made use of the natural resources at its disposal.

At the end of the nineteenth century the railway to Uganda was built, and it passed through the edge of South Kikuyu country. The Protectorate of British East Africa was established, and later Kenya became a British Colony. Kikuyu country became linked by road as well as by rail with other areas; towns were built, many people left home and went to work in other parts of the country, and the Kikuyu people no longer lived as an enclosed community.

With changed conditions many old customs have, of course, become obsolete. Many could not be practised, anyhow, in urban or semi-urban society, and many of the Kikuyu people have become Christians, and no longer practise the old religious ceremonies. Moreover, now, since Kenya has become an independent state, the Kikuyu are part of the Kenyan nation, which is internationally recognised, and which plays a part in international affairs. They have become, as it were, citizens of the world, but they will be interested in this record of their tribal past. Dr Leakey had meant to write another book describing how life has changed for the Kikuyu people from last century to modern times. It is our loss that he was never able to do so.

When we began work on this manuscript we had no idea of the magnitude of the work that remained to be done. We were working from a draft of a three-volume manuscript written nearly forty years ago, but never fully revised, proof-read, or organised for publication. Our first task was to familiarise ourselves with the text, at the same time indexing all of the Kikuyu words and Kikuyu names of trees and plants, as many still needed to be translated or identified. As with any manuscript, there were a great many editorial corrections to be made for spelling and grammar, as well as repetitious passages to be deleted.

A great deal of reorganisation also had to be done, as the manuscript was still basically in the form it had taken during Dr Leakey's discussions and interviews with the elders. In the course of this reorganisation and cross-checking we discovered some minor, and a few important, contradictions in the text, probably because the notes for different chapters came from different discussions with the elders, and in some cases from entirely different elders. Such contradictions are, of course, to be expected in research of this kind, and can in some cases be attributed to local variations, or alternative modes of behaviour. What made the contradictions unusually difficult to resolve in this case was the fact that all of the elders whom Dr Leakey had consulted in this work, as well as Dr Leakey himself, were no longer living. In fact, there are no elders living today who are old enough to have participated as adults in the ceremonies and social life of the 1880s and 1890s, which is the era with which this book deals. We were extremely fortunate, however, to have had the help of two elders (now in their seventies and eighties) who had made themselves familiar with these traditions, and who felt that they ought to be recorded. They were able, in almost all cases, to help us sort out the contradictions, to clarify confused passages, to correct Kikuyu mis-spellings due to typographical errors, and to translate difficult Kikuyu passages, especially those in the songs, which have all but been forgotten today. We tried, when a meaning was doubtful, to get confirmation from more than one person before deciding what we ought to say, and this was usually possible. We regret that a few words remain untranslated, and that some passages are vague or ambiguous.

Dr Leakey wrote his book in the present tense, and this has been changed to the past tense. The present tense, where it is used, refers to the time of publication, and not to the time the manuscript was written (unless so indicated as 1939), but beyond this, little effort has been made to "modernise" the book from an anthropological standpoint. Whatever Dr Leakey might or might not have done along these lines, we were not able, nor did we desire, to make any vast alterations of this nature. The methodology, research and theory of this book, therefore, stand as written in 1939.

We are most grateful to all the people who have so kindly helped us. For the many hours which they spared us, we wish especially to thank Ex-Senior-Chief Josiah Njonjo and Mr Ishmael Ithong'o, and the people whom they consulted. We are particularly grateful to Mr Kĩrĩka, and also Mr Kanuri, Miss Kabuye, Dr Gillett, Dr Bally and Dr Ojiambo, who all helped us with the botanical section, to Dr Kariuki and Dr J. Cooper who helped us with veterinary terms, and to Dr Mwathi for his help with medical ones. Thanks are also due to Mrs D. Bolnick, Mrs E. Ensminger, Mr J. Mead, Miss I. Sedgwick, Mrs O'Meara, Miss A. Thurston, Mr G. Trapnell and the Church Missionary Society for other assistance.

Working on another person's manuscript is not easy, but we hope that the result of our efforts will be of value, and that Dr Leakey would have given his approval to it.

G. S. B. Beecher and J. Ensminger
Nairobi, 1977

Preface

p. xi-xv

Having been born and bred among the Kikuyu tribe and having grown up speaking their language as easily as I do English, I had long planned to write an account of their tribal customs, but my archaeological researches from 1926 to 1936 caused me to postpone undertaking this work. Ever since my childhood I have taken every possible opportunity to learn the details of Kikuyu life and customs, and much of this information has been collected in notebook form.

Since early childhood, I was always painfully aware that many matters were withheld from me, partly on account of my youth and partly because I was a white man. Even the fact that I took part in modified initiation rites in company with boys of my own age and became a recognised member of the *Mũkanda* initiation age-group did not open the doors to all the information that I wanted. There was much which, by age-long custom, could be imparted only to those of the status of *kĩama* elders (council elders).

In 1934, I paid the requisite fees and was admitted as an elder of the first or junior grade, and in 1938 I became an elder of the second grade. In this way I became entitled to information that I could not otherwise be given.

As I could not become a third grade elder until I had children of my own attaining the age of puberty, and as I could not become a fourth grade elder unless I wished to have initiation ceremonies centred on my own homestead, it was clear that I should not get all the information that I needed through my ordinary means of contact with the tribe.

Therefore, when, in 1937, I came out from England with a grant from the Rhodes Trust to start writing my account of the customs of the Kikuyu tribe, it was clear that I first had to find some other means of obtaining and checking certain categories of information. Through the medium of Senior Chief Koinange, I was able to explain the position to a large number of senior and influential

tribal elders. I pointed out that inevitable changes were accompanying European civilisation and education, and a great many of their ancient rites and ceremonies had already ceased to be practised; it seemed likely that when the present generation of elders died much of the information would be lost for ever. I then pointed out that the ancient Britons were living in much the same state of culture as themselves when the Romans brought their civilisation to Britain, and that we, the descendants of the ancient Britons, knew little about the customs of our forefathers because the Romans had not left any detailed accounts of ancient British law and custom. I stressed that their own descendants would be in much the same position of ignorance if a detailed account of Kikuyu law and custom was not prepared now, while there were still elders living who could describe the position as it was at the end of the nineteenth century, when European influence first began to make itself felt. I urged that for the sake of their own descendants, if not for any other reason, I should be allowed to have information which, as a white man, and as one who was only a second grade elder, I was not really entitled to receive. I further asked to be allowed to prepare this information in book form.

In due course I was given the necessary permission, subject to certain minor exceptions, and I set to work to obtain the information I needed with the full consent and co-operation of the elders.

My method of work was as follows: using the information that I already possessed as a basis, I sat with groups of senior elders and took down from them detailed notes on the various subjects I wished to deal with. After obtaining notes on, for example, birth customs, from such a group, I worked over these notes with a small committee of selected elders and prepared a first draft of my chapter on that subject. My small committee consisted of the four following elders: Rũhiũ wa Rĩbiro, Mbatia wa Gatũmũga, Gaturu wa Mũrĩithi and Macaria wa Kamau. Fresh information was obtained, for we were able to work slowly with ample time, whereas when working with the larger group, I had to work fast because they were men drawn from a wide area who wished to return to their homes as soon as possible.

Having obtained a satisfactory first draft of a chapter, I collected a second large group of elders distinct from those who gave me the first set of notes. I and the four members of my small committee met them and presented the facts to them as I had recorded them in my first draft. They were asked to comment on them. This process resulted in a certain amount of correction, and many new details were obtained. Moreover, by checking with an entirely different group, I was able to discover which facts were local variations and which were customs of much wider application.

Having obtained a first draft and these additional comments for, most of my chapters, I took the two best members of my committee to Nakuru, where I prepared my second draft with their continual guidance and help. For the more complicated chapters, the data in the second draft were presented once more before a small group of senior elders back in Kikuyu country, and approved by them, with occasional minor corrections, as representing the facts.

Certain chapters in the book were not dealt with in this way for special reasons. For my chapter entitled "Magic", as well as for the accounts of magical ceremonies conducted by a medicine-man (*mũndũ mũgo*), I obtained my information from a special committee of eight elderly members of the profession, including some who were general practitioners, and one specialist in each of the following matters: herbal remedies, divination and magical protection. Working with this committee I obtained my preliminary notes and then, under the guidance of the whole committee, I prepared the first draft of the chapter on these subjects. I then asked them to appoint two of their number to assist me in preparing the still more detailed second draft.

As far as the chapter on "The *Ituĩka* Ceremonies" (handing over of tribal responsibility from one ruling age-group to the other) is concerned, I had to work on a less satisfactory basis. Although there were many men alive who belonged to the generation which took over the authority at the last *ituĩka* ceremony of the nineteenth century, only a few were left who actually took part in the ceremonies as delegates representing their generations. Of these I was able to find only two who had sufficiently clear memories to be of value. In addition to this, there was some political objection to my receiving more information, and I believe, frankly, that the account in that chapter is far from complete.

The chapter on "Witchcraft" is the least satisfactory in the whole book, for no one who in the past had been a genuine dealer in witchcraft (*ũrogi*) survived, or, if any were still alive, the ever present risk of being found out and put to death made them unwilling to admit to it.

Readers will note that my chapter on "Crafts and Industry" is little more than a catalogue of the Kikuyu objects of material culture with the briefest of descriptions. For this I myself am solely to blame. The time available to me for obtaining my material and for writing the book was limited, and I judged it (rightly or wrongly) to be more important to obtain as full an account as possible of law and custom. I should have liked to expand the chapter on "Crafts and Industry" into a whole book, had this been possible.

I feel sure that there are people who will be critical of the fact that I confined my account to that section of the Kikuyu tribe that lives south of the Chania River; I will therefore meet this criticism in advance. The laws and customs of the Kikuyu of the Fort Hall and Nyeri districts are basically the same as those of the southern section of the tribe, but in matters of detail they differ so significantly that a generalised account could only be misleading. It would be necessary, in a book dealing with the whole tribe, to add greatly to the length of each chapter and show what the differences in each custom were in different areas. This would in turn have required a much greater length of time than was at my disposal.

Another criticism that will certainly be levelled against my book is that it is a straightforward description of customs, without a critical analysis and without any attempt to compare and contrast the customs with those of other tribes. I plead guilty. I frankly believe that my first duty in writing this account is to lay the facts before other social anthropologists, and record them for the descendants of the Kikuyu who have provided the information. It is not without fear of being accused of false modesty that I state that I am fully aware that this book is both wholly inadequate and incomplete. Any book that is based completely upon second-hand information instead of upon a combination of information and personal knowledge is inevitably bound to be incomplete, and this book deals mainly with Kikuyu customs as they were up to the end of the nineteenth century, before I was born.

I have made the account as full and as complete as my time and opportunities would allow, and it is my sincere hope that in the few years that still elapse before the old generation of Kikuyu pass on to the spirit world, some of the young, educated Kikuyu will take my book, and, using it as a basis, obtain and record much more information from committees of elders called together by themselves.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my deep gratitude to all those who have helped in this work. The Trustees of the Rhodes Trust generously provided the funds which enabled me to devote my time to this task, and words cannot adequately express the measure of my thanks to them. The Kikuyu elders, once the reasons were explained to them, co-operated with me

wonderfully, and have made possible an account which would otherwise have been impossibly superficial. Government chiefs, headmen and, more particularly, Senior Chief Koinange, did everything in their power to help me, and Chief Koinange added to his other kindnesses by placing his guest house at the disposal of my wife and myself whenever we wanted it. The Kenya Government, and especially the officials with whom I came into contact in Kikuyu country, gave me every possible assistance, and I particularly want to thank Colonel Anderson, who put a Government bungalow at our disposal when we most needed it.

It is with regret that I have to record that, although they gave me every assistance, some Government officials expressed the view that this study was of "purely academic interest and had no practical value". From this view I differ very strongly indeed. I believe that it is impossible to study and understand the present day problems in the Kikuyu tribe without a knowledge of what their laws and customs were before the impact of European civilisation.

Special thanks go to Mrs Spiers of Nakuru, who very kindly undertook the original typing of my manuscript, a task made doubly difficult, I fear, by the illegibility of my writing, and I cannot thank her enough.

Finally, I extend my warmest thanks to all those elders who gave so much of their time to help me record the facts correctly, and in particular to Rũhiũ wa Rĩbiro, whose able mind and clear way of expressing intricate matters made the work infinitely easier.

L. S. B. Leakey
Nairobi, 1939

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Figures

Map: South Kikuyu, showing Fortified Villages near the Southern and Western Forest Boundaries in the early 1890's. The Fortified Villages shown here include some identified by Dr G. Muriuki of Nairobi University and by Ex-Senior Chief Josiah Njonjo, as well as those identified by Dr Leakey himself. The map also shows early European Centres at Fort Dagoretti, Fort Smith, Nairobi and Kabete Mission.

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Orthographical Notes

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The Kikuyu spelling used in this book is that which was recommended by the United Kikuyu Language Committee, and is what has been used in A. R. Barlow's *Studies in Kikuyu Grammar and Idiom*, T. G. Benson's *Kikuyu-English Dictionary* and A. R. Barlow's *English-Kikuyu Dictionary*, edited by T. G. Benson and the Kikuyu Bible.

The Kikuyu alphabet used, is that in T. G. Benson's *Kikuyu-English Dictionary*, with *mb*, *nd*, *ng*, *ng'*, *nj*, *ny*, and *th* treated as separate consonants, as they represent, in fact, specific sounds; the alphabet, therefore, is in the following order: *a*, *b*, *c*, *e*, *g*, *h*, *i*, *i*, *k*, *m*, *mb*, *n*, *nd*, *ng*, *ng'*, *nj*, *ny*, *o*, *r*, *t*, *th*, *u*, *ũ*, *w*, and *y*. (*D* and *j* are never used without an *n*, and Kikuyu has no *f*, *l*, *p*, *q*, *s*, *v*, *x*, *or z*).

Pronunciation

The Vowels
a, *i*, and *o* are pronounced as in Swahili and French.
e is pronounced as in Swahili, and like the French *è*.
u as in Swahili, and like the *o* in the English word *who*.
ĩ is half-way between *e* and *i*.
ũ is half-way between *o* and *u*.

All these can be either long or short. This sometimes is shown in writing by the use of two vowels (e.g. *aanake*), but only if there is a grammatical reason for it (*aanake* is *a-anake*, where the first *a* shows that the word is plural), or where two words are differentiated only in length, so that there would be confusion if they were written the same.

The Consonants
b is pronounced with the lips not quite touching; *c* is usually pronounced in Southern Kikuyu as *sh*, though in some parts of Kikuyu country it is pronounced as *ch; g* is as in the English *get* (never as in the English *gem*), but with the back of the throat not quite closed; *h* and *m* as in English; *mb* as one sound, like the *mb* in the English words *tremble* and *humble; n* as in English; *nd* as in the English word *and; ng* as in the Southern English words *hunger* and *anger*, or the Northern English pronunciation of *singing; ng'* as in the Southern English *singing; nj* as the *nge* in the English word *tangerine; ny* as in the name *Sonya; r* as in English, but with the tongue not quite touching the teeth or palate; *t* as in English; *th* as in the English *the* or *this; w* and *y* as in English.

Archaic Forms

In many of the old sayings, old songs and old prayers quoted in this book there are words and expressions that are archaic in form, and the spelling of some of them is according to the pronunciation of North Kikuyu. This is because they have been handed down in their ancient form. Variations naturally arise in different parts of a widespread tribe, but old expressions often retain the old form.

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Chapter 1 - I: Kikuyu Social Organisation

Introduction
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Leaders of the People
The Role of Professional Classes
The Place of Religion in Kikuyu Social Organisation

Introduction

It is commonly believed among those who know nothing of African peoples, that the so-called primitive tribes lead a "simple life," and it is to be hoped that those who read this book will begin to realise that the life of the individual Kikuyu before European contact was just as complex as that of any so-called civilised person, even if the complexity was of a different type.

A Kikuyu individual's life was punctuated by what are known to anthropologists as *rites de passage*, ceremonies which mark the passage of an individual or group of individuals from one stage of life to the next, at which time new responsibilities are undertaken towards each other. In fact, a complex social structure was clearly demarcated on the basis of these stages of life, with each individual having well defined responsibilities, according to his stage of life, not only to his family, but to his village, his territorial unit, the people of South Kikuyu district, and the tribe as a whole.

Before turning to a detailed discussion of each of these specific topics, it may be helpful to give a broad summary of Kikuyu social organisation, followed by a Kikuyu elder's reminiscences of his life before the turn of the century.

The Importance of the Family in Kikuyu Social Organisation

The most fundamental basis of Kikuyu social organisation was the family. Many of the most important religious and social ceremonies were invalid if any member of the family was absent, and individuals, (p.2) therefore, were constantly required to subordinate their own plans to the welfare of the family as a whole. Failure to do so deliberately or intentionally could have only one result—disinheritance. The family unit which was of the greatest importance to the individual was the immediate family, the members of a single homestead (*mũciĩ*), but the greater family (*nyũmba*) was only slightly less important.

The Kikuyu family system was an inclusive one, and the classificatory system of relationships (described in Chapter 20) meant that everyone was catered for. Even an orphan was well looked after, for when a mother died a classificatory mother took her place. Only in exceptional circumstances, such, as a severe famine, or an outbreak of smallpox, was anyone ever deserted.

In the average Kikuyu homestead the bonds of friendship and love which linked a man, his wives, and their children were very strong. For example, although from every animal that was slaughtered there were certain joints that belonged by right to the children, others that belonged to the women, and yet others to the men, it was seldom that a father did not give bits of his own portions to his children and his wives. Furthermore, the anxiety that a father showed if a child was ill, or that a husband felt if his wife was not well, was just as great among the Kikuyu as among Europeans, even if it was manifested somewhat differently.

The proportion of a Kikuyu's wealth that he expended upon his wife and children was very great, and a man would often deprive himself of much that he desired in order to provide suitable ornaments and garments for his sons and daughters, and in order that the rites and ceremonies that were performed for them at various stages of their lives might be accompanied by adequate feasts, and thus not cause them to be ashamed before their contemporaries.

The Kikuyu family was the centre of all religion, and family worship was more important to the Kikuyu than public worship, which was conducted only on very special occasions, and it was from his or her parents that every child learned about God and about the spirits of the departed.

Similarly, it was in the family circle that Kikuyu children obtained most of their education, much of this informal education being imparted by means of stories with morals. Every father spent much of his time in the evenings talking to his sons, while every mother similarly taught her daughters, and it was these sessions which were largely responsible for the strong bonds existing between Kikuyu children and their parents.

Further education was imparted by making the children share (p.3) in the life of their parents. Girls learned to do agricultural work and to cook by helping their mothers do this work, and in turn they learned to be mothers by looking after their small brothers and sisters. As boys grew up they learned to take a large share in the work of herding goats and sheep. They were taught that an important part of their job as young men would be not only to defend the tribe against the Maasai, but to raid the Maasai and capture goats, sheep, and cattle so as to keep up the supply of these animals, which were an essential element in the functioning of Kikuyu society. The possession of stock was essential for the observance of innumerable customs, from birth ceremonies, to initiation, marriage, and death and burial rites.

Individual Rites de Passage

The birth of a Kikuyu baby was the signal for the first of many *rites de passage* that would mark the child's whole life. A new individual had become a potential member of the tribe, but it was realised that in its early years the child was really little more than a part of its mother, and wholly dependent upon her. Therefore, the ceremonies that marked the birth were designed to emphasise the child's connection with its mother, and until the child underwent the next *rite de passage*, he or she was identified with the mother in all respects. If its mother became ceremonially unclean, the child was also rendered unclean, and if its mother had to take part in any ceremony, the child took part as well.

There was no hard and fast rule which fixed the age at which a Kikuyu child took part in the next *rite de passage* (the re-birth ceremony), save only that this had to take place before he or she could proceed to the following stage. Ordinarily it was performed at about the age of five, but among members of the Ũkabi initiation guild it took place earlier. The significance of the second birth ceremony as a *rite de passage* is that it marked the severing of the special ties which bound a child

to his or her mother and identified the child with her. The child passed, in fact, into a wider life, in which he or she became an individual member of the family in his or her own right with responsibilities towards all members of his or her father's family, or in the case of children of matrilineal marriages, to all the members of the mother's father's family. During this stage of life, however, there was no responsibility to the community beyond the family, except that all boys, after the second birth ceremony, had certain duties towards the members of the warrior regiment that was in power.

p.4

The next *rite de passage* in the life of an individual of either sex was initiation. This prolonged ceremony (starting with a preliminary training and ending with the period of the novitiate), was probably the most important in the life of any individual, and marked the passage from childhood to adult status. It was the beginning of much broader and more important responsibilities to the community outside of the family. At initiation each boy and girl became bound by very special ties to all the other boys and girls who were initiated in the same lodge, and by only slightly less important ties to all those who were initiated in the same year and who thereby became members of the same initiation age-group. Henceforth loyalty and service to other members of the same age-group was just as important as loyalty and service to the family.

For the individual the next *rite de passage* was marriage. For every male the marriage of a first wife was a matter of the greatest importance, and was marked by special rites and ceremonies, which were far more important than the mere transfer of marriage payments (*rũraacio*) from the man's family to that of his bride. In the case of the marriage of a second or later wife, there was a modified ceremony which marked the passage into the next stage of life, but this affected only the new bride, for the bridegroom had entered upon this phase of his life at the first marriage.

After marriage there was only one more *rite de passage* for women, that which accompanied death and the passing into the world of departed spirits. For men, however, there were important intermediate *rites de passage*. First came the payment of a fee which made him a council elder of the first or junior grade, which was a kind of apprenticeship to the status of elder. Then came the payment of the second fee, which entitled the man to take an active part in the proceedings of the council assemblies, and finally came initiation as a third grade elder, which no man could enter until he had a child old enough for initiation.

Upon initiation as a third grade elder, a man assumed considerable responsibilities to the community for keeping law and order, and for the administration of justice. While a man was a member of the two junior grades of the council his attendance at council meetings was optional and he had no special duties to perform such as administering oaths or making peace between rival warrior parties, but once a man had become a third grade elder he had to assume these duties, and he could not refuse to attend a council meeting if called upon to do so, unless he had very pressing reasons in the form of urgent business. Moreover, as a third grade elder every man had responsibilities connected with religion, the conducting of certain types of purification (p.5) ceremonies, and duties in connection with conducting the affairs of the country as a whole.

For those who had reached and passed the prime of life, death came as the final *rite de passage*, and marked the passage of an individual from the material to the spirit world. Those whom death overtook prematurely also passed to the spirit world, but the *rite de passage* that accompanied their death was a much modified one, because the normal sequence of *rites de passage* that should have punctuated the interval between birth and death had not been completed.

Death for the Kikuyu was not the end of all things, but simply marked the passage of the individual into yet one more stage of life. In the spirit world responsibilities were not discarded, but were, if anything, strengthened, especially those towards the family.

Group Rites de Passage

Quite distinct from the *rites de passage* which punctuated the life of the individual were those which marked the progress of groups of individuals, and which corresponded with the assumption by the groups of new powers and responsibilities towards the community. When a new initiation age-group had been formed as a result of a series of initiation ceremonies throughout the country, it became part of the junior warrior regiment that was as yet incomplete.

Each warrior regiment had to be made up of nine initiation age-groups, and although the members of all initiation age-groups assumed individual responsibilities to the community at their initiation, the junior regiment that was in the process of formation had no direct responsibilities or powers, and was subject to the authority of the senior, or complete warrior regiment.

As soon as a new warrior regiment of nine initiation age-groups was complete, ceremonies took place which marked the assumption of power, authority, and responsibility by the new regiment, and the retirement of the senior regiment. These ceremonies might be regarded as a form of group *rite de passage*. In each territorial unit throughout South Kikuyu, selected representatives of the new regiment took part in such a ceremony so that the whole regiment was associated in the *rite de passage*, not only through the selected representatives, but also through the payment of fees by all individuals. This step marked the shifting from one regiment to another of responsibility for military protection and defence, for the punishment of theft and witchcraft, (p.6) for general police duties, and for the organisation of social activities such as dancing and *kĩbaata* assemblies.

Although each new regiment, on taking over power, assumed these duties and responsibilities corporately, the members had the right to delegate the control and power to smaller committees called *njama cia aanake* (the warriors' council). In each territorial unit the warriors who belonged to the regiment that was in power appointed such a committee to act for them, organise them, and lead them, but these committees were responsible to the warriors who appointed them, and if they were unsatisfactory they could be deposed and new committees elected. The members of each territorial committee in turn, then selected one or two of their number as delegates to a committee (*njama*) to represent the warrior regiment as a whole.

The last group *rite de passage* was that which marked the coming into power of a new generation *riika* (age-group), and the retirement of the generation that had held office for the past thirty or more years. When the time came for a new ruling generation to take over control of the country, the members of that generation in each territorial unit that was about to assume new rights and responsibilities appointed representative delegates from each territorial unit, who then assembled as a committee, and appointed from among themselves delegates to take part in the actual ceremony. The ceremony took place in the Fort Hall district of Kikuyu country, in the region of the Kikuyu traditional centre of origin (Mũkũrũwe wa Gathanga). This *rite de passage* marked the assumption, by all those who were represented by the delegates, of important responsibilities to the community and the tribe as a whole.

The Responsibilities of every Adult Male Kikuyu

The first responsibility of each adult male was to his father and mother and to their children, including his half-brothers and sisters. This group comprised the family in its more limited sense,

for they were the members of a single *mũciĩ* (homestead). When a man married he added to these responsibilities those of his own homestead. But in addition to his responsibilities to the members of his father's homestead, and, when he was married, his own, a man had definite responsibilities towards the family in the wider sense, the *nyũmba*. This was the family in the classificatory sense and included all males who were connected with a man through the male line and who were sufficiently close relatives to be described by special classificatory terms (see Chapter 20).

p.7
The responsibilities towards all members of the *nyũmba* included obligations to assist in paying communal fines, blood money, and marriage payments.

Although in small sub-clans the *nyũmba* was to all intents and purposes synonymous with the *mbarĩ* or sub-clan, most of the big sub-clans comprised several distinct *nyũmba*, all of which, however, took patrilineal descent from the founder of the sub-clan. Every male Kikuyu had certain definite responsibilities to members of other *nyũmba* of the same sub-clan as his own *nyũmba*. This in particular referred to the use of land for building or cultivation sites.

Any member of a sub-clan who happened to have more than enough land for his own use had to help other members of the sub-clan by giving them at least cultivation rights if they genuinely needed them. Thus, if a rich member of a sub-clan acquired a new estate (*gĩthaka*) for himself, any other members of that sub-clan could come and ask for the right to cultivate a portion of it within reason, provided there was room for them, and although they did not thereby acquire any rights in that land, they could use it so long as the legal owner did not need it for his own expanding family.

Every man was also automatically a member of one of the nine (really ten not nine) main clans (*mĩhĩrĩga*) of the Kikuyu tribe, according to which sub-clan he belonged to. Although a man's responsibilities to people who belonged to the same clan, but not to the same sub-clan, were small, there was a definite obligation as a clan member to give help, in the form of defence and hospitality, to all members of the clan if it was reasonably possible to do so without neglecting greater responsibilities.

The other line of responsibilities which affected every male Kikuyu had nothing whatever to do with relationships by blood or by marriage, but was based upon matters of territorial unity. Every adult male, as a member of a *mũciĩ* (homestead), had definite responsibilities to all members of the other homesteads which together comprised the *itũũra* (village) or the *kĩhingo* (fortified village) in which his own homestead was situated. These responsibilities were primarily connected with protection and defence.

Every member of a village had to help with any work that was necessary for fortifications; had to be willing to take part in all defence measures; and had to respond to any fire alarm and assist in putting out the fire. Every member of a village had also to be willing to assist other members of the same village—if called upon to do so—in bush clearing, in cultivation, and in hut building. These obligations were mutual, and therefore of great benefit to everyone concerned. Any man could count upon sufficient assistance to build a hut in a day, or to (p.8) clear a large area for cultivation in a few days, without having to pay for the labour (except that he supplied a feast), provided always that he had initiated the work himself, as proof that he was not calling help because he was lazy or incompetent.

The whole of Kikuyu country was divided up into a series of ridges extending from the north-east to the south-west, and each ridge was called a *rũgongo*. Each *rũgongo* was regarded as a separate

territorial unit even though it was divided into several estates owned by different sub-clans. Because the territorial units were quite large, they were further divided, informally, into territorial divisions called *mĩaki* (fire-linked units), whose inhabitants lived near enough together to get embers from each other's fires if they needed them, and to join together for a variety of social activities. A *mwaki* would normally coincide with the land of an estate. Thus all of the *mwaki* divisions or any given ridge formed one formally recognised territorial unit. The inhabitants of the various villages in any territorial unit were bound to each other by certain very definite responsibilities. The villages that were at either end of the ridge on the frontier were of the *kĩhingo* type (fortified), and were responsible for the protection of the rest of the inhabitants of the ridge from attacks by Maasai or raids by the Akamba. But the inhabitants of the *matũũra* (unfortified villages) in the middle area of the ridge were not exempt from defence obligations, and if there was an attack on the fortified villages at either end of the ridge, those who inhabited the central villages had to go to their aid.

The other main obligations which all members of a territorial unit had towards each other were in connection with religion, and the leaders of the people in all the villages of a territorial unit had to join together in acts of worship and sacrifice to the supreme deity. Failure to do so led to punishment by the deity, and necessitated the ceremony of *kũhĩtũkania mbũri* (make the sheep pass each other), which was performed by the whole territorial unit, in order that the deity might see that they were once more co-operating and fulfilling their mutual obligations.

The cohesion of the population of each territorial unit was further assured by means of two committees. In every territorial unit the warriors of the regiment that happened to be in power appointed about eight of their number as a *njama* council. The members of this *njama* were drawn from different village *njama* in the territory, and being representative, they saw to it that in all matters which came under their control, the members of the whole territorial unit shared the obligations and responsibilities. Similarly, the *kĩama* council of elders in each territorial unit appointed delegates to a sort of central committee (p.9) who were responsible for all religious ceremonies that affected the territorial unit as a whole, as well as such ceremonies as those which took place in times of famine and pestilence.

All the territorial units of South Kikuyu, that is to say, from the Chania River to the southern Kikuyu boundary, were together ranked as a *bũrũri* (country). Within the *bũrũri*, law, justice, tribal custom, and religion were unified, each adult male having definite responsibilities for law and order and religion, which he exercised through delegates.

In all matters that affected the country as a whole, the direct responsibility rested with one or two central committees. The first of these was a committee composed of delegates of the warrior regiment that was in power, these delegates being chosen in each territorial unit by the territorial committee from among their own number. The second central committee was composed of delegates of the council elders of each territorial unit, and chosen in like manner.

These two central committees, one representing the warrior regiment that was in power and the other representing the elders of the generation that was in power, always worked in consultation with each other. They were not standing committees, however, and were called together only when there was some matter affecting the whole country, as, for example, if the Maasai tribe wished to make a peace treaty with the Kikuyu, or if new laws were to be made or old laws repealed.

In only one matter did the Kikuyu tribe as a whole act together, and that was in connection with the *ituĩka* ceremonies which marked the handing over of power from one generation to another.

All the preliminary arrangements for an *ituĩka* ceremony were made separately in South Kikuyu, Central Kikuyu, and North Kikuyu, as three distinct *mabũrũri* or countries, but for the final ceremonies delegates from each of the three countries met together at the traditional centre of origin of the tribe.

The Position of Women and the Division of Labour

Although the Kikuyu women had no political rights, it would be utterly wrong to assume that they had no influence and no status in the tribe. In a superficial examination it is true that the life of a Kikuyu woman seems to have been unbearably hard and dull. She appears to have had to shoulder the burden of all the hard work, much of her time being spent drawing water, cultivating the fields and carrying (p.10) food home from them, preparing food for her family, and doing other hard and often unpleasant work. Because by age-long custom it was the women and not the men who carried heavy loads, casual observers have formed the opinion that they were treated more as beasts of burden than as human beings. Because a woman was in many cases the wife of a polygamist, it is assumed that the Kikuyu wife was nothing more to her husband than a useful worker and someone with whom to satisfy his sexual desires. These assumptions, however, do not reflect the truth, as we shall see.

It is of course true that the first or senior wife of a polygamist held a position with more status than a second or other wife, but almost every Kikuyu woman had the chance to become a first wife provided that she was sufficiently attractive. By Kikuyu custom no girl was forced to marry against her will, and every opportunity was given to girls to contract love marriages. Those who failed to do so had two alternatives. They could become second or third or later wives of men who had already a first or senior wife, or they could contract a matrilineal marriage, live at home, and bear children who would become members of their mother's clan and family.

Those women who became first or senior wives of a man were certainly not mere drudges and servants of their master. Their position was one of considerable importance. All the more important rites and ceremonies in the home were centred round them, and in almost all religious ceremonies conducted by their husbands they participated with them. Their husbands were expected to consult them in all matters which affected the home, and real friendship and companionship was added to the physical side of married life.

Even those who became second, third, or later wives of men who already had a first and senior wife were not by any means objects of pity. In many cases girls who had the chance of becoming first wives chose rather the position of a second or third wife, because they loved the man, or because they considered that they would be happier thus. Sex appeal is a curious thing, and there is no doubt whatever, that many girls found themselves more attracted by men of forty and fifty than by men of their own age, and it would be a serious mistake to think that girls who married men old enough to be their fathers all did so of necessity or because they were coerced.

Once married, any Kikuyu woman who became a mother was assured of honour and respect. Among some peoples the life of an old woman is one of suffering and hardship, but a Kikuyu woman who had sons was never in this position. The love and respect which a Kikuyu man showed to his mother was quite touching, and exceeded (p.11) that shown to his father. No wife, even though she was the favourite of her husband, received such consideration as did his mother, and few men would openly go against their mother's wishes. Although in matters of family religion and worship it was normally the most senior male who conducted all religious ceremonies, no man whose father was deceased but whose mother was alive could ever lead his family in worship

unless he lived such a long distance from her that she could not come. Nor would any man whose mother was alive make any decision of importance about his property or his family affairs without first consulting her.

In the ordinary course of events it is true that a Kikuyu woman did not inherit or own property in her own name, but there were exceptions to this rule, and, as we shall see, Kikuyu women even had the right, in special circumstances, to marry wives of their own. Moreover, although women did not normally own property, they had considerable say in the disposal of property, and every husband had to consult his wife if he wanted to do anything with the goats and sheep that were kept in her hut, and which were earmarked for use for herself and her children.

The commonly expressed view that Kikuyu women had to do all the really hard work that was involved in providing a livelihood for themselves and their families is quite false. There was, of course, a recognised division of labour, and it is true that some of the really hard physical work fell to the lot of women, but by no means all of it. The clearing of forest and bush land for cultivation was essentially men's work. Similarly, the preparation for cultivation of freshly cleared ground, using nothing but the digging stick, was men's labour, and it was of the hardest type. If the division of labour between the sexes seems, in spite of this, to be unfair, it has to be remembered that all young men had arduous and at times dangerous duties to perform as the protectors of the land, as well as being expected to enrich their families by raiding the Maasai. The older men, too, had public duties which took up much of their time, and had they been responsible for a bigger share of the labours of family life, they would have had to neglect their public-duties.

The fact that so many Kikuyu rites and ceremonies were accompanied by beer drinking has led many observers to the false conclusion that older men spent their time drinking beer only for pleasure. This is far from the truth, for although there were beer drinks which were mainly social functions, the vast majority of occasions when beer was consumed were connected with religious rites and ceremonies, or with matters affecting the social organisation.

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It has been argued in certain quarters that the Kikuyu—and almost universal Bantu—custom of paying *rũraacio* or marriage payments, is proof that the women of the tribe were little better than chattels that were bought and sold. Nothing is further from the truth, and the marriage payments were far more a guarantee of good faith than anything else, although the idea of compensating the bride's family for their loss was also an underlying motive in the system.

Another argument that is sometimes given to prove that the position of women in Kikuyu society was a low and degraded one is that widows were "inherited". It is overlooked that what was inherited was actually the responsibility of providing food, clothing, and all other necessities, and that the inheritance of a widow did not by any means imply the acquisition of sexual rights with her. It did, on the other hand, mean that there was no such thing as a destitute widow.

Leaders of the People

In spite of the many references to "chiefs" in the works of early travellers into Kikuyu country, it is quite clear that Kikuyu social organisation did not include the system of chieftainship. Not only was there no such thing as a paramount chief, there was no such thing as a territorial chief. The fundamental basis of Kikuyu social structure was that the people ruled themselves, through an organised system of committees.

The title *mũthamaki*, which has so commonly been misinterpreted as chief, did not mean chief at all, for those who held this title had no powers or rights vested in them alone, and could act only in consultation with their colleagues. A *mũthamaki* was, at the most, the president of a committee, who might persuade those who were with him to take a line of action that he considered to be best, but who could not impose his will upon them.

In every village there were warriors belonging to a number of different initiation age-groups. The members of each initiation age-group of warriors in any village appointed one or two men as their leaders and representatives, and these men formed two *njama* councils, one representing those members of the village who belonged to the regiment that was in power, and one representing the regiment in process of formation. In addition to these two committees every village had its own *kĩama* council of elders.

Each of the three committees had one or two men to whom the title (p.13) of *mũthamaki* was given. The *mũthamaki wa njama* (the president of the senior warriors' committee), was certainly not a chief, although as long as his committee supported him he was something in the nature of combined chief army officer and chief constable for his own village. The *mũthamaki* of the committee of the uncompleted warrior regiment was even less a chief, since he and his committee were merely an advisory body leaving all the intricacies of the work to the regiment in power. As for the *mũthamaki wa kĩama* (the president of the village council of elders), he was more of a chief justice than a chief, for his authority was mainly judicial.

The committees of each village appointed representatives to committees representing the whole territorial unit, and these were organised along the same lines as the village committees, each with a president who, although certainly not a chief, undoubtedly had considerable influence. The very fact of their appointment meant that they were men of outstanding ability and intelligence, and therefore men whose advice the people as a whole; would always consider seriously. To an even greater degree, the men who were chosen when the need arose, to represent a whole territorial unit on a central, countryside committee, were men who wielded great influence and authority, but who were emphatically not chiefs.

If the son of a *mũthamaki* became in his turn a *mũthamaki*, it was only because he had inherited the outstanding ability of his father, and never simply because he was his father's son. The inheritance of power or authority by virtue of descent was unknown.

The nearest approach to chieftainship and the autocratic power that is therein implied was to be found in the power and authority of a man who owned an estate (*gĩthaka*). A man who bought land from a Ndorobo, and who got together relatives and friends to help him cultivate it and build a fortified village on it; wielded great personal authority and power in respect of his land and in respect of the village which he founded thereon. As the owner of the land he had absolute rights over it, and could allow or prevent cultivation on any part of it. No one could build a homestead on his land without his consent, and no one could cut down trees on it unless he gave his permission. As the founder of the village he also had a great deal of special authority, but whether in respect of his land or of the village which he founded, his authority was limited to the control of his own property. He had no judicial or legal authority over the people, and at best, if they displeased him, he could turn them off his land or sue them in the *kĩama* council. If it happened that the man who founded a village and who owned the estate was one whom his colleagues chose to appoint (p.14) as a *mũthamaki wa kĩama* (leader of the council of elders), then undoubtedly his authority was greatly increased, but this seldom happened

Once the original owner of an estate and founder of a village died his authority over the property passed in the normal course of event to all his male heirs jointly, and they appointed one of their number a trustee (*mũramati*) on their behalf. A trustee was given nearly as much autocratic power as the original owner, for although he had in theory to consult with all the male members of the family, he was rarely in fact called upon to do so, so long as his decisions were fair and in accordance with their general wishes. The great difference, however between the powers of the original landowner and founder of a village and the trustee who was chosen to succeed him, lay in the fact that the latter could be deposed from office if he displeased his fellow heirs. Moreover, in all extremely important matters affecting the estate the trustee had to call a meeting of those who had appointed him and consult them to find out their wishes.

Towards the end of the period with which we are dealing in this book, the English set up a fort and trading centre at Fort Smith, and they almost at once invested certain prominent Kikuyu men with powers that they did not formerly possess. It so happened that Waiyaki whom von Höhnel, Lugard, and others all referred to as a chief, was the owner of a large estate in the region of what later became Fort Smith, and he was also the founder of a large village there. In this capacity he had considerable local authority over those who lived on his land and had their homesteads in his village. He also was a *mũthamaki* (leader) of the local council of the senior warrior regiment, and a man whose opinions the other local people respected. The European thought of him as a chief, and invested him with the powers of a chief and when things went against them they considered that it was Waiyaki's fault, little realising that though he could advise his people, he could not give peremptory orders except in connection with his own property and land.

A few years later Purkiss came into contact with another influential Kikuyu elder, Wangengi, whom the Europeans also invested with the authority of a chief. In his case, moreover, the Europeans promised him the support of their soldiers if the other Kikuyu failed to obey him (in respect of orders which he had actually no right in Kikuyu law to give), and as a result, Wangengi very soon assumed powers that were not his, knowing that he had the might of the white man's guns to back him up.

In a few cases Europeans met members of the central committee of council elders, whom they mistakenly regarded as district chiefs, and (p.15) made agreements with them. They did not realise that these men were merely delegates from the various territorial units who had to report back to those who had sent them, and who had no power at all to impose their will upon the people. When the people rejected the agreements, the Europeans accused the delegates of treachery and failure to honour and comply with agreements.

The Role of the Professional Classes

The most important professional class among the Kikuyu was that of the *andũ ago*, who, as we shall see, were workers in magic, diviners, and specialist doctors of one kind and another, combining herbal remedies with magical practices. Whereas in some other African tribes the men who corresponded to the *andũ ago* of Kikuyu country were leaders of the people and men with great authority, both in matters of religion and politics, the *andũ ago* were simply private individuals. According to the degree of their skill and the nature of the work they specialised in, they were consulted by a small or large circle of people, but all that they gave was advice—which the person who consulted them might or might not follow—and services for which they charged regular fees.

It has been suggested in Routledge's book on the Kikuyu (1910) that the *mũndũ mũgo* (medicine-man) was a kind of priest acting as a mediator between the people and the deity. This view does not reflect the true position. The *mũndũ mũgo* certainly believed that he owned his powers and skill to the deity, and he prayed to God more frequently than any other person, but he was not a priest. He took no part in public worship, except occasionally in his private capacity as a council elder, or when he had been called in by the council elders to conduct the magical side of religious ceremonies or sacrifices, especially those connected with divining diseases or plagues.

Although the *andũ ago* were neither priests nor leaders of the people, it would be idle to suggest that they did not exercise considerable influence through their professional work. Their influence was strengthened by the fact that people firmly believed them to be endowed by the deity with special powers, and that they professed to work in close contact with the spirits of the departed members of the profession.

Few Kikuyu who had taken the trouble to consult with a *mũndũ mũgo* would disregard the advice and instructions given by him, just as the European who puts himself in the hands of a medical specialist rarely disregards what the specialist says. The relationship between (p.16) the private individual and the *mũndũ mũgo* was, in fact, similar in many ways to that between a man and his doctor, and it would be as incorrect to regard a *mũndũ mũgo* as a priest or ruler of the people as it would to consider a European doctor as such. Of course, there were individual members of the profession who, at a later date, neglected this professional work in favour of taking a prominent part in *kĩama* councils, and occasionally became *athamaki a kĩama* (council leaders). However, this was not by virtue of being a *mũndũ mũgo*, but in spite of it, and as a direct result of neglecting professional work in favour of public service.

Apart from the *andũ ago*, the most important professional men were the blacksmiths (*aturi*). They, too, had no special authority by virtue of their profession, but they were much respected and feared for the simple reason that people believed that the curse of a blacksmith was very powerful, and they therefore feared to do anything that might bring such a curse upon themselves. Far from being despised and scorned, blacksmiths were very much respected among the Kikuyu, and many of them held positions of importance in the *kĩama* councils in addition to being professional workers in iron.

The only professional class among the Kikuyu that was despised and scorned was that of the soda miners. These, the *andũ a igata* (people of soda), married among themselves and did not mix socially with other Kikuyu, who looked down upon them and were afraid of them, because their profession made it necessary for them to break many of the social laws and customs of the tribe. They went off for months at a time and lived in the wilds of Maasai country, and because of these extended journeys the men commonly took their wives with them, and had sexual intercourse with them in the wilds, which was taboo by Kikuyu law and custom. In this and in many other ways, such as eating the meat of wild animals, they became unclean, and ordinary people who mixed socially with them and who married their daughters would become affected by the *thahu* (uncleanness), which, however, did not adversely affect the soda miners themselves, because it was an essential part of their life.

The Place of Religion in Kikuyu Social Organisation

Belief in God (Ngai) and in the ancestral and departed spirits was the fundamental basis of life as a Kikuyu. Any person who lost his faith in the religious beliefs of the Kikuyu ceased to be a Kikuyu to all intents (p.17) and purposes, and became an outcast. Law and order depended more upon

religious beliefs than upon the police activities of the *njama* (warrior's council), or the judicial authority of the *kĩama* council of elders.

Religion held each family together, united the inhabitants of every village, bound together the inhabitants of the various villages of a territorial unit, and gave them the cohesion that was essential to their mutual security. If the inhabitants of different villages in a territorial unit lost touch with each other and became too independent of one another, the wrath of God visited them and persisted in punishing them until they became united once more by joint acts of public worship and sacrifice.

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Chapter 1 - II: An Elder's Story

Introduction

This part of Chapter 1 is a translation of an account given in 1936 by an elderly Kikuyu named Kabetũ wa Wawerũ. He tells of his life in Kikuyu country during the second half of the nineteenth century. The story ends in 1901 when a Church Missionary Society station was established at Kabete, and his three sons started to attend the mission. The account was taken down verbatim by one of his sons and has been translated by me. I have decided to use it as an introductory chapter to this study of Kikuyu law and custom prior to 1900, because, in this simple story, the elder mentions a great many of the customs and ceremonies which are described in more detail in the subsequent chapters.

I hope that I shall be able to get the story of his eldest son (who has been to England, who owns his own car, and who until recently was senior High Court interpreter in Nairobi), as an introduction to my second study, which, if ever written, will be a record of the changes that have taken place in Kikuyu life, thought, and custom as a direct result of the coming of the white man.

Kabetũ's Story

I was born very long ago at a place called Gĩthĩga, but I do not know how old I am. I was the youngest son of my mother. Her eldest son was called Mũcene, and her second son Kĩariĩ. Both of these elder brothers of mine were born at a place called Gaicanjirũ, in the Mũrurĩ district, the area where my father, Wawerũ, and both his brothers, Mbogo and Njerũ (also called Mũthemba), lived. It was there, at Gaicanjirũ, that my grandfather Kairũmi died.

My father once told me the reason his family left Gaicanjirũ and moved to Gĩthĩga, where I was born. At Gaicanjirũ our family had a big estate (*gĩthaka*), and they were very rich, having immense flocks and herds. Because of this, they were much hated by many of their neighbours, who frequently resorted to witchcraft (*ũrogi*) against them. In fact, it was there (p.19) that my father's brother Mbogo was killed by witchcraft. It was on that account that my father decided to move his family away. He moved to Gĩthĩga between the Kamĩtĩ River and a little stream that was called Maibatha. My father did not possess any land at Gĩthĩga, but lived there as a *mũhoi* (tenant) on another family's estate.

Another thing my father once told me was that when my grandfather died he left a deathbed curse forbidding any member of his family ever to turn back in the direction from which the family had moved; he believed in the saying, "To turn back is to return to sorrow and poverty".

As a small boy I spent my whole time looking after my father's goats and sheep. He was very rich indeed, partly as a result of having been allotted all the stock that my grandfather had received as marriage insurance for the marriage of my father's sisters.

As a small boy I used to imagine that I was clever enough to deceive the others, as the following incident shows. I used to count one whole day of herding as though it was two whole days. From the time that I took the flocks out in the morning to the middle of the day, when I rested them, I would count as one day, and then from the time I took the herds out again after the midday rest until the evening I would count as a second day, so that I counted two days for each day. Thus, when I had been in charge of the flocks for three whole days I used to reckon it was six, and so I could

end my turn at herding (*tuithia rũũru*). And since I knew in my heart that I had not really done my six days, I used to go to my grandmother's and hide there for the next three days. When my father got anxious and looked for me, he would find me there, take me home, and beat me soundly.

Regarding the customs and ceremonies of the "second birth," I used to be told that my father performed this ceremony by actually putting the child back into its mother's womb again when it was a few weeks old! Although I was put through this ceremony as an infant in arms, I cannot give any account of what actually happened.

In the days of my childhood I used to wear a little slim cloak made from the skin of a goat or a sheep, brayed until it was very supple.

As for the food plants which my father and his people used to grow, they were not very different from what is grown today: bulrush millet, foxtail millet, sorghum, *njahĩ* beans, kidney beans, sweet potatoes, yams, sugar-cane, edible arum, and bananas. When I was a child, the section of the Maasai tribe that I used to hear mentioned most was that called Barabiu, and it was mostly with them that the Kikuyu traded. These Maasai used to come from the west, coming into Kikuyu country at a place called Ithukĩ cia Korio, near Kijabe. At that time the Kikuyu traded with the Maasai mostly for sheep. A Kikuyu who took a load of foxtail millet, sorghum, or banana flour could get in exchange a ewe or a ram. Banana flour was made by drying green bananas in the sun and then grinding them to flour in the mortars; this flour was made only for the Maasai trade.

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When I was a small boy, raids on a big scale into Maasai country were not at all common, for the warrior age-groups called *Mũngai*, *Njoroge*, *Wainaina*, and *Marere* all made a habit of going only on minor raids (*ita cia guamba*). First of all they would send out spies whose duty it was to go and find out where the Maasai cattle were being grazed. When those spies had obtained all the information they required, they would come back, call together the other warriors, and tell them how they could best carry out a successful cattle raid. Then the party would set out by stealth and raid the herds easily, because there were seldom many herdsmen in charge of them. These minor raids were never made by large parties of warriors; at most twenty or thirty warriors would carry out the raid. That was the custom at that time.

I remember that on one occasion when I was a small boy, a Maasai raiding party attacked the small village of a man called Mote. That particular Maasai party came from the direction of Rarakua and Marũrũi. They burnt the whole place and drove away an immense number of cattle and sheep, and in spite of every effort the Kikuyu armies never succeeded in overtaking them. They got away with everything.

Another thing that I recall about my childhood days was how we used to take all our goats and sheep to the sacred tree of the family for a sacrifice. The Kikuyu sacred tree was the *mũgumo* (*Ficus natalensis* or *F. thonningii*). When we went to the sacred tree, the ram to be slaughtered was seized, all the goats and sheep were herded together, and the animal to be sacrificed was led round them together with the boys and men that herded them, who had to be carrying a staff of *mũgere* wood. After this ceremony of encircling the flocks (*gũthiũrũra mbũri*), the sacrificial animal was slaughtered, and its breast was cut off and hung in the sacred tree. The rest of the meat was eaten, and then the elders would all chant the following words of prayer to God: *'Hũũ! Hũũ! Thathaiya Ngai. Nĩ ithuĩ Mwangi-ĩ. Hũũ! Hũũ!'* (*Hũũ! Hũũ!* Invoke the mercy of God upon us. It is we of the Mwangi elders. *Hũũ! Hũũ!*).

(Readers will find in later chapters that this description does not tally exactly with that given to me by my committee, probably because Kabetũ's description combined facts about several sacrifices).

When I was a small boy the country was affected by a serious famine that was called the Famine of Destruction (*Ng'aragu ya Kĩrĩĩka*). That famine killed off a large number of people owing to its severity. When the short rains were due they failed completely, and when the long rains were due they too failed, and, the drought became more and more severe. Finally, the famine became so severe that my father and other elders took their sheep all the way to Mang'u to buy oxen for meat, but even so, they could not keep us from being very short of food. The famine became (p.21) worse and worse, and our condition more serious until at last the rains came and the famine ended.

As I grew older I was promoted from herding the sheep and goats to helping to look after my father's cattle. It happened one day that I was very hungry and went and dug up some of my father's yams to roast and eat. Having dug them up, my companion and I roasted them and had a feast, but when my father discovered what I had done he sent for me and he asked me, 'Who sent you to dig my yams on such-and-such a day?' I answered him, 'It was because I was very hungry and I had left here in the morning without having anything to eat.' My father was very angry indeed and swore at me and threatened that he would kill me. I went straight to my mother to ask her what I should do, and I said to her,

'Mother, if a person, even if young, has property of his own, would his father take his life?' and she answered, 'No, my son, he would not'. So I said to my mother, 'Please find me a bush-clearing knife', and when she had given it to me I went off to find a piece of ground and got permission to make a garden then and there. I sharpened my knife three times in one day until it was very sharp. Then I cleared the bush from my patch, made a big clearing, obtained a digging stick (*mũnyago*), and dug up the ground. When I had prepared the ground I planted yams of my own. After that I cleared a second piece of ground and planted sugar-cane, and yet a third, and planted *njahĩ* (lablab) beans. When at length my own field of sugar-cane came into bearing, I was very generous with it, and whenever my older brothers, who were warriors, had other warriors as guests, I used to go and cut sugar-cane for them.

In those days, if a boy was on good terms with the warriors they would treat him better than the other boys, and as a result of my generosity and friendship with the warriors, I was made leader of the other boys in our village.

It came to pass that on one occasion when we were dancing the *ngũcũ* dance, after I had had my ear-lobes pierced, a number of us met with a lot of other boys so that there were about thirty of us in all. It was a Kikuyu custom among boys to challenge other boys, and among our number was one big boy called Kĩhara. As I wanted to challenge this boy, I asked the other boys of my band, 'Would any of you dare go tell Kĩhara he is not to call you *Mũriũ* ('My son,' literally, 'His son,' or 'Sonny'—see glossary) to your face any more?' They were all afraid to do so because Kĩhara was much older than any of us. When they said they were afraid, I said to them, 'If I go and forbid Kĩhara ever to address me as *Mũriũ* again, then you will know that even though I be initiated with you and become a member of your age-group, I will beat any one of you who dares to address *me* as *Mũriũ*. Then I steeled myself for a fight, gripped my club firmly, and I went up to Kĩhara and said, 'You are *Mũriũ*, and I will give you leave to address me as *Mũriũ* only when the Kamĩtĩ River dries up altogether'. When that boy heard me he leapt upon me with his club, hit me on the head, and nearly felled me (p.22) to the ground. (I still have the scar of the place where he hit me). Then we really came to blows. We fought hard, and after a bit we were pulled apart by the others. Later he and I became members of one age-group, that is, I was initiated with him and not with my companions, who had to wait another year. After that incident all the other boys were afraid of me, and they were never insolent to me again.

Foreign traders came to this part of the country a long time ago, but in those very early days they never used to enter the confines of Kikuyu territory. Instead they would go to Ngong, and when they reached there they would fire guns as a signal. When the Kikuyu heard the noise of the guns they would know that the foreign traders had arrived and they would go over to trade for such things as beads, cloth, and brass wire. Our name for the traders of those early days was *thũkũmũ*.

Since at that time large parts of the Kabete area were still under forest and bush, and as there were lions, elephants, buffalo, and rhinoceros in this forest and bush, when people wanted to go to Ngong to trade, they used to be escorted by a band of warriors to protect them from the dangers of the journey.

We in the Gĩthĩga district used to go in a large body accompanied by some of our warriors. Having reached Ngong, we would barter with the traders, and when we had finished trading, the same warriors would escort us home again. When we got home we would have to hand over to the warriors the fee called *ndũma ya Waithaka* (literally, 'an edible arum for Waithaka'—see glossary). This fee was what we had to pay for being taken into country that was new to us. The form the fee took, as far as we boys were concerned, was that we had to dig up large quantities of yams and roast huge piles of them to be eaten by the warriors who had accompanied us. This task was a strenuous one because we had to light huge fires to roast the yams, and every yam had to be scraped and prepared, and all the time the warriors just sat around and watched, not lifting a finger to help us, and they would not so much as touch a yam until it was ready to be eaten. When they had eaten them, we had to go and cut sugar-cane for them. In those days in Kikuyu country boys were very much ordered about by the warriors.

My inseparable companions during boyhood were Kamau wa Kagucia and Cege wa Kĩrĩita, the two who went with me to the pre-initiation dances (*ngũcũ* dances). Our chief ornaments were made from small black seeds (*ngũnyi*) which we collected from the *mukũnyi* plants in the forest. There was one kind of *ngũnyi* ornament called *mathanũ*, while another way of using these seeds was to combine them with strings of beads that we got from the foreign traders.

I do not remember any total eclipse of the sun prior to my initiation to manhood, but I remember that there was a severe earthquake. That earthquake took place about midday, and lasted only a few minutes. On the other hand I remember being told as a small boy about a total eclipse that took place during the time of the major age-group known (p.23) as Kang'ethe (about 1824-1827), and that eclipse occurred in the afternoon.

When I was older I remember seeing a total eclipse, and it happened a short time before the initiation of the age-group known as *Ngigĩ* (about 1890). That total eclipse occurred in the early afternoon at the time I was herding flocks. When

it grew dark I prepared to drive the animals home for the night, when all of a sudden it began to grow light once more. All the people said it was God who had darkened the sun, and on the following day they sacrificed sheep at all the sacred trees in order that the darkness should not return again.

Mũhũro was the name of certain exercises which we boys used to perform. When we were participating in these exercises we used to dress up in colobus monkey skins, wear *ngũnyi* seed necklaces, and attach bits of colobus monkey fur to our ankles and to our hair. We also used to smear our whole bodies with white earth (*mũũnyũ*), and on our backs we each carried a buffalo horn which we would strike in tune to the dancing that accompanied the exercise. Later on we boys would go to the dancing grounds and dance the *kĩbũiya* dance, or we would go and dance in the courtyard at the home of the father of one of our number.

When the *kĩbũiya* dancing was over, we used to start dancing the *mũũmbũro* dance. Of all the Kikuyu dances I consider none so wicked and wanton as this *mũũmbũro* dance, for during that dance boys would do all manner of evil things. For instance, if we came to a woman's hut, we would raid it and take all her food, or if we came upon elders having a meat feast, we would drive them off and seize all their meat for ourselves.

The whole object of the *mũũmbũro* dance and the practices that went with it was to show our parents that we were anxious to be initiated. The reason for acting in the wanton way that was customary was to make our parents so exasperated that they would at once give permission for our initiation to be set in hand, so that they would be rid of us.

When the *mũũmbũro* dancing was over, we did not have to wait long before we were initiated. Once my *mũũmbũro* dancing was done I went straight to my elder brother to consult with him and let him know that it had been settled that I was to be initiated that season. I had to go to a place called Kĩawaroga, where my brother lived, and there I told him everything, and what things I needed from him. Then I went home again, spoke to my father, and he gave me a barrel of honey. I took up my bow and went straight to Kagucia, the father of one of the boys who was my constant companion, and I took the honey to him and told him that I wanted to be initiated from his homestead. He consented to this, and it was arranged that I was to stay (be *hithio* literally 'be hidden'—see glossary) there for the ceremony.

After a few days, the day for the initiation ceremonies to start was fixed, and the day for the *matuumo* ceremonies arrived. On the *matuumo* day, the day before the actual initiations, there were many things that we had to do, like going to the sacred *mũgumo* tree, performing the ceremony (p.24) of the *mũrũngũ* (ceremonial beer), and so on. I might almost say that the object of the ceremonies that day was to make us forget that the next day would be a day of pain caused by the operation of circumcision.

On the following morning, after we had been circumcised, we were taken to a big temporary hut (*gĩthũnũ*), where we were kept in seclusion during the eight days of our initiation training, after which we were allowed to return to our homes.

While we were neophytes (*irui*) in the temporary hut, or lodge, we were not allowed to eat any food, not even potatoes, with our hands. Instead, the potatoes and other food were peeled and prepared for us and wrapped in banana bark, from which we had to eat without touching the food with our hands.

While we were in the lodge, we were taken care of by warriors whose chief task was to look after our circumcision wounds and see that they did not become septic through lack of proper attention.

When the eight days were over we each went to our own homes. In the days that followed, we used to meet together in the fields to dance and sing the novices' dance called *waine*. The object of that novice dance was to sing the praises of all those who had not shown fear when they were operated upon, and to thrust scorn on all the cowards, to whom we used to give the nickname of *irũũgi* (those who jump or wince). Whenever a *kĩrũũgi* entered the novices' dancing circle, everyone else forming the circle would fall to their knees, leaving the coward standing up by himself in the middle.

After dancing the novices' dance for two or more months, and when our wounds were completely healed, we separated and went off in bands in search of a woman with whom to perform the ceremony of *kwĩhaka mũũnyũ* (ceremonial rape, literally, 'smearing oneself with chalky earth'—see glossary). My special companions and I went a great distance in our search, and when we had found a woman and performed the ceremony we returned home and had our heads shaved for the ceremony of *gũthiga* (admission to adult status). We were given new garments and became warriors of the class of those who had just come out (*muumo*), that is to say, juniors who have only recently been initiated. After I had performed the ceremony of *gũthiga*, and had become a young warrior, I became very keen on washing myself

and anointing myself with red ochre. My father gave me a he-goat to slaughter for a meat feast, and also a ram whose fat I used for mixing red ochre for my body.

When my age-group companions and I started wandering about the country visiting our friends, I found that I was very attractive to the initiated girls. Now at that time we had not yet paid our fees or received permission to join in the dances of the members of the senior warrior age-group, that is, the age-group known as *Nguo ya Nyina*, but while I was still a very junior warrior I made love to, and obtained as my lovers, several of the girls who were already the lovers of the senior warriors. After the seniors had made careful inquiries and got to know of the (p.25) matter, these girls were severely beaten, and then were made to wash with ashes and water to purify themselves from the evil of having slept with a junior warrior who had not yet paid his fees entitling him to this practice.

When my father heard what had happened he was sore at heart because of what the warriors had done, and he said to himself, 'Supposing they go and kill my son because of their jealousy'. So he sent for me, and he said to me, 'It looks as though evil will befall you because of the senior warriors, therefore I want you to arise and go to your uncle at Ting'ang'a and live there with him until I send you a message that you can return home'. So at that time I left my home at Gĩthĩga and went to live with my uncle Mũthemba at Ting'ang'a.

Now it happened that just then my uncle was planning to move to the Kabete district, and after I had been with him for only a few months at Ting'ang'a, we crossed the Karura River, came to the ridge known as Kĩbĩcĩkũ, where Chief Josiah has now built his home, and built a homestead there.

We had scarcely settled down, however, before our flocks succumbed to an epidemic, and all but a few died. Soon after that my uncle himself fell sick and was very ill for many days. When at last he was a little better he decided to go back to Ting'ang'a, which we did. But his illness grew worse, and he died there.

Shortly after that my father decided to move from Gĩthĩga, and he came here to the Kabete district with all his flocks and his herds, his wealth, and with his wives and their families. He also brought all the widows of his brother Mũthemba, and their children. After he had come to this district, we decided to move from the site where my uncle had built his homestead, so we crossed the Gĩtathurũ River and built on its far bank. My father had first of all started negotiations with the Ndorobo hunter (*mwathi*) who was the owner of the land and who was called Mũnaĩ. My father then and there asked Mũnaĩ whether he could sell us that land straightaway, but the Ndorobo hunter said he was to wait a little, as he wanted first of all to marry one of our family.

A short time after that my brother Kĩariĩ went on a raiding party with some of the other warriors. While he was away Mũnaĩ proposed to one of my sisters called Wambũi, and before he started to negotiate the marriage settlements, my brother came back from the raid. Mũnaĩ came to call upon my sister and brought with him a he-goat. Among the Kikuyu it was always customary that when a man came to call formally on his betrothed's family he brought with him a fat ram or a he-goat for slaughter. It happened that at about the time the goat was to be slaughtered I had planned to go on a visit to Ting'ang'a, so the day after the slaughter I set off, and I was away three whole days.

When I got back I found that my father was seriously ill. I asked my mother what had happened and she told me that long before, when my father was living at Gĩthĩga, he had been warned by a seer that he should (p.26) never eat any meat from an animal slaughtered on behalf of his daughter, for if he did he would die very quickly. It seemed that when this particular he-goat was slaughtered my father temporarily forgot about this prophecy and ate some of the meat. So my father became very ill indeed, and he became so feeble that we carried him out of the homestead lest he should die there. We built him a temporary hut in the fields, and it became my duty to sit up with him during each night. One night I heard him call to me, and when I went to him he said, 'My son, I feel as though I am about to die; it is good, therefore, that you should go and fetch Kahiti, Kĩmani wa Mũirũ, and Kabirũ. You and your mother's son Kĩariĩ come as well'. So I went, and first of all I found and sent Kĩariĩ, and he and I sat down by my father. He apportioned to us our share of his possessions, giving Kĩariĩ three cows and me two. Then when the others had come he blessed them also. My father lasted out that night, but on the following morning he died, leaving us yet unmarried warriors.

Shortly after that Mũnaĩ began to hand over his marriage payments. First of all he brought thirty rams. After a long interval I took five of these rams and slaughtered them for a meat feast. My older brother sent me a message saying, 'Unless it is your wish that you and I should dwell for ever in our mother's hut, why then slaughter all thirty rams'? I sent a message back saying, 'If you propose to get married, I won't kill any more of the rams, but if you do not do so quickly I'll kill and eat them all'. Then he proposed to a girl called Wamũtwe wa Njara. We negotiated the marriage payments, and my brother married.

It was while I was still unmarried that the first white foreigners passed through Kikuyu country. They came first to Ngong just as the other traders used to do, and there they fired off their guns, and the Kikuyu went thither to trade with them as they had done in former times. After a little the foreigners spoke with a Kikuyu named Gathu wa Warũirũ and another man called Kahũthũ. Of that party of foreigners, one was a European and the other was an Arab whom we used to call Rũara, and the European made arrangements with Gathu and Kahũthũ to act as his guides and show him the way through Kikuyu country. On the day that they moved from Ngong they came with a very large number of porters, and they pitched their tents near the Gĩtĩngĩti River at a place known as Iruĩro, not very far from where Fort Smith is now.

When the Kikuyu heard that the foreigners had actually entered their country, all of them from the whole of this district came together and planned to attack them, take their trade goods, and kill them. But when they came to the camp the European told Gathu to say to the assembled Kikuyu that he did not want war, but rather peace. On the other hand, if the Kikuyu wanted to fight, let them know that however many they were they could not conquer the European. Then the European said, 'In order that you may know that you cannot fight us, please take one of your war shields and place it yonder on the far side of the stream'. Gathu took his shield some way away on the far side of the (p.27) stream and set it there. Then the European took his gun and fired repeatedly at the shield till he smashed it into small pieces. When the Kikuyu saw that display they were afraid, and they went home again and gave up the idea of an attack.

After camping on that spot for five days, the European told Gathu to summon everyone who desired to be friendly to come to the camp and receive presents—cotton cloth, brass, and other things. A great body of warriors came together, and they were given many presents, but having received them, they fought among themselves as to their distribution, because there was no agreement made about the distribution beforehand. As a result, many of those who came got nothing at all because they were not as strong as the others.

From there the European moved his camp and marched and set up his second camp by the waterfall known as Ndururumo ya Hinga on the Karura River. There he stayed three days, after which he marched to Kiambu, where, for the first time, he went through ceremonies of taking solemn oaths of friendship with certain Kikuyu leaders. The reason for these oaths was to show that henceforth neither party would deal evilly with the other.

So they went on peacefully till they reached Mang'u, where a few Kikuyu seized three of their safari donkeys and took from them the loads of cloth and brass wire. When the European became aware of this incident he said to his followers, 'Do nothing at present, let them take the things', and so they reached their camping ground, pitched their tents, and camped. But the next morning he decided that it was now an opportune moment to punish the Kikuyu who had stolen his goods, so the party got out their guns, made an attack upon the local Kikuyu, and fought them without mercy, killing about two hundred and fifty. That night Gathu and his companion Kahũthũ hid themselves and ran away because of the fear that had seized them after seeing so many people shot down.

Those foreigners passed on, and we heard later that they had reached Mathĩra in the territory of the leader known as Wang'ombe, and there they fought against the Kikuyu of the Nyeri district. We heard later still that they had turned and marched in the direction of the Aberdare Range, and that they went over it to Naivasha, and, after reaching Naivasha, turned round and came towards Ngong, and so went home. When all this happened I was still unmarried. I was not at all wealthy, but after a year or two I decided it was not good for me to remain any longer without a wife. Since I had not the wherewithal to get married, I saw that it would be best for me to go raiding, and if I was killed doing so, well and good; if not, I would come back rich. So I joined a party of warriors who were going on a small scale raid, and I killed a Maasai warrior and came back with his sword.

In Kikuyu, a man who goes raiding and brings back cattle is known as *mũtua-njaũ* (one who captures a calf), and one who kills an enemy and (p.28) brings back his sword is called *mũtua-rũhiũ* (one who captures a sword). And so, when I got home, I had to dance and sing the triumph song (*ina kaarĩ*), as I had killed a man. Whenever I went to sing and dance the *kaarĩ* I was given presents of goats and sheep, and I even went up to Ting'ang'a to friends of the family, and there, too, I performed and was given presents of goats and sheep.

My wealth grew out of the sheep and goats I thus obtained, and I herded my flocks carefully and bred an immense herd. Then I proposed marriage to a girl called Wanjirũ wa Kamũyũ, and I handed over ninety ordinary goats and sheep and eighteen stall-fattened beasts (*ngoima*). After this I was left with only a few animals and I herded them carefully and bred them until once again I had many.

Then I proposed again, to a daughter of Wagara, as I wanted a second wife. On this occasion I handed over eighty ordinary goats and sheep and sixteen stall-fattened animals.

Not long after I had married my second wife the Ndorobo hunter announced that he wished us to start making payments for the land, and he fixed the amount that we were to pay at 700 goats and sheep. Every member of our family began to assemble his contribution and we made up a herd numbering 460 goats and sheep, which we handed over. Then we gave the Ndorobo hunter the *mwatĩ wa njegeni* ('virgin ewe for the stinging nettles', or compensation for getting stung when pushing his way through the bushes—see glossary), and he marked out our boundaries. The south-east side of the boundary ran from the Gĩtathurũ River up through the depression where there were some *mũkũrũe* trees, and thence to Kandutha. From there the boundary ran straight down to the Gĩtĩngĩti River. In the north-east our boundary started at the big rocks by the Rũngũthiũ River and ran to the Gĩtĩngĩti River, so that our boundary in this direction marched with that of the family of Wakarũũgi. We were left with a debt of 240 goats and sheep and sixty stall-fattened animals (*ngoima*) to pay, for we had paid only ten *ngoima* to start with. After about three planting seasons we paid over these 240 goats and sheep and the sixty *ngoima*, and completed the deal.

We of the *Mwangi* generation had our *ituĩka* (the handing over of tribal responsibility from one ruling age-group to the other) at Ting'ang'a on the dance field that is known as 'the field of the river'. All the married men of the *Mwangi* generation, both those just married, and those of great age, were entitled to attend the ceremonies.

People from the whole country attended the ceremonies at that place, and everyone who could manage it went there. Everybody knew where the meeting place for the ceremonies was, because the news of it had been broadcast to the people by special messengers. We of the *Mwangi* generation had to pay fees of oxen and fat rams, and it was the eldest sons of each family who had to provide these. A few of the oxen and rams were slaughtered at home by those members of the *Mwangi* generation who were unable to attend the ceremonies at the field.

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When those attending the ceremonies arrived at the dance field at Ting'ang'a, they lit many fires, roasted meat, and feasted until they were satiated. When they had eaten their fill they sang the following song:

Ndathiaga Gatira,	I was going to Gatira,
Ndathiaga Gatira,	I was going to Gatira,
Gatũũra wa Kagai	When Gatũũra wa Kagai
Akĩngarũrĩra njĩra,	Turned me back,
Akiuga ituĩka ndaanangithia.	Saying that I had spoilt the *ituĩka*.
Wamwangi wa Gatete,	Wamwangi wa Gatete,
Kanyũ, Wageni, Mwangi,	Kanyũ, Wageni, Mwangi,
Matirũmaga kĩndũ	They do not eat anything
Nĩkĩeha kĩa maambura.	Because they are sad about the ceremonies.
Wamwangi wa Kamũkwa,	Wamwangi wa Kamũkwa,
Tũthiĩte gĩtuamba.	We have been to the dance field.
Itirĩ na mũndũ,	They have no one on them,
No thiari igũthathaya.	Only tick birds pacifying the cows.
Karũĩgĩ wa Mũcene,	Karũĩgĩ wa Mũcene,
Wamũmenya ciothe,	He knows everything,
Wamũmenya ciothe,	He knows everything,
Cia rũtara ndakamenya.	But he will never know what are the things that are hidden high up.

The meaning of and reasons for the *ituĩka* ceremonies are as follows. Both long ago, and even until now (1936), the Kikuyu had certain ceremonies which they could participate in only by paying fees to those of the senior grades. For instance, if a man wanted to have his son or daughter initiated he had to pay a fee of a fat ram; if he was of the *Maina* generation he paid it to the *Mwangi;* and vice versa, for there are but two generations according to the Kikuyu idea, *Maina* and *Mwangi*.

I am of the *Mwangi* generation, and my father was a *Maina*. My children are therefore of the *Maina* generation, for the *Maina* generation begets the *Mwangi*, and the *Mwangi* generation begets the *Maina*, and so it has been from the beginning.

The present day generation is no longer concerned with such matters, but in the olden days the generation that had not been through the *ituĩka* ceremonies did not have the right to initiate their children unless they paid special fees to the ruling generation. Similarly, a man who was not of the ruling generation had no right to claim either the skin or the breast of an animal slaughtered in connection with legal cases, and in the days when raiding parties were the order of

the day, the generation that was not in power could not participate in a raid, or in its proceeds, without first paying special fees to those in power.

We, the *Mwangi* generation, had our *ituĩka* a very long time ago, and since the new *Maina* generation has never "redeemed the land" from us, we are still in power to this day.

p.30
Had it not been for the coming of the Europeans the *Maina* generation would have redeemed the right to rule from us a long time ago in order that they might initiate their children without paying special fees to us. The power to rule should by now be theirs, and it would be to them that the new *Mwangi* generation should be paying their fees. That is the meaning of the *ituĩka* ceremonies.

After the foreigner whom we spoke of as Rũara left the country, a long time passed before any more foreigners entered our territory. Then came a party which included one European whom we called Tari. He did not come by the route from Ngong, but rather by a middle route, entering our country at the place we used to call Kĩĩnũ-inĩ (Nairobi), and then passing along the ridge that we call Ũthĩrũ. He continued his journey until he reached the place called Kĩawariũa, where he pitched his tents. He spent the night there, and was greatly pestered by the Kikuyu people, for many of his porters were killed when they went to draw water at the river. After a time the Kikuyu succeeded in completely preventing them from getting water, so this party dug a deep pit and buried all their trade goods; then they went away and returned to Mombasa.

(Kabetũ remembered the name Tari in reference to a European who came about that time, but the actions mentioned by him here seem to refer to several different people; see Chapter 3 for clarification).

After a short absence they returned with a much greater following and entered our country by the same route as before, and on this occasion they asked to be taken to the leader of the Kikuyu in that district. They went to Waiyaki when they heard it was he. At that time Waiyaki's village was situated a little to the north-west of where Fort Smith is now at a place where there was a level area of land in a slight hollow. On this occasion there were two Europeans in the party, the one whom we called Tari, who had come before, and the other, Mbaya, for whom it was a first visit. When they reached Waiyaki's village they went straight into his own homestead, and put up their tents inside it.

After they had dwelt with Waiyaki for some time, they began to come to an understanding with the Kikuyu people of the district, and they made presents of cloth and brass wire to them. After this understanding had been reached a large number of Kikuyu were chosen to go to Mombasa and fetch the belongings of these Europeans. One of those chosen for this task was Kĩnyanjui wa Gathirimũ.

After these Europeans had dwelt for some time in Waiyaki's homestead, Waiyaki decided that it would be a good thing if perhaps he gave them a place to build a homestead of their own at a little distance from his village. So he led them out and gave them the site which is now called Fort Smith. Here they built themselves a fortified enclosure which they surrounded with a deep trench and a stone wall, and they dwelt there.

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Eventually the following incident took place. One day Waiyaki attended a beer party, and when he was very drunk he took his fighting sword and went to the Fort to insult the Europeans. He very nearly wounded one of them with his sword in the course of an argument, whereupon the European had him arrested, and his hands bound.

When the people heard that their leader had been arrested they all wanted to attack the Fort at once and release him, but Waiyaki sent messages to them telling them not to attempt to fight.

On the day that Waiyaki was taken to the coast in exile, a number of Kikuyu warriors belonging to Waiyaki's own age-group arranged ambushes along the route in order to waylay and kill his escort and release him. Once again Waiyaki himself intervened, and when he was warned of the plan and where the ambushes were to be, he put a curse on any Kikuyu who attempted to fight for his rescue. Much later we heard that he had died at a place called Gĩkũmbũriũ (perhaps that is the place now called Kibwezi). When Kĩnyanjui and all the band returned from the coast, they found that Waiyaki had been taken away.

Those Europeans continued to live at Fort Smith, and they appointed Kĩnyanjui their chief guide to show them the surrounding country.

Once the foreigners had thus got a footing in our country, they did not stop coming, but rather came in increasing numbers. After they were established at Fort Smith, they collected a band of Kikuyu from among the then junior grade of warriors, such as Cege wa Mũthemba, Kariũki wa Muutĩ, and Njũbi wa Njonjo, and they used this band to guide them when they made punitive attacks upon Kikuyu ridges in various parts of the country.

A short while before the foreigners became numerous in our country, we suffered from a raid by the Maasai, who had allied themselves with the people of Mathĩra in order to attack us. It was soon after my second marriage, when my first wife had already borne me three children, a boy and two girls, that the Maasai made this attack upon us. First of all they raided cattle at a place called Ithanjĩ rĩa Thithino, and they carried off many goats and sheep when they perceived that the Kikuyu were not very strong. Having driven the raided stock a little distance, they returned and attacked the region of Mũgũga, and there seized a certain amount of stock, after which they headed in a south-easterly direction towards our Kabete district.

When they reached the district occupied by the sub-clan of Gĩkarũ they divided their force into two; one party went along the Kĩbĩcĩkũ ridge, and the other along the path leading to Cura, and the former party killed one of my daughters and my son. A little later this party was surrounded by a Kikuyu army and wiped out, not a single one escaping.

Because of the successful raids that the Maasai had made a little earlier, they began to despise the people of our district, and after a short interval they made another big raid with the intention of getting through as far as Marũrũi.

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A big army came and camped not far from Mũgũga at a place called Gĩthũngũri gĩa Gĩcamũ, and all the Kikuyu warriors of the area, both junior and senior, came together to fight them there. The battle commenced, and was actually being fought, when Kĩnyanjui asked the Europeans for the assistance of some soldiers to help in the fight against the Maasai. The Maasai were overcome because of the rifles, for the Kikuyu alone would not have been able, on this occasion, to defeat them. They were slaughtered, and only a few not worth counting escaped. There was no Kikuyu warrior who survived that battle who did not have the honour of killing at least one Maasai or Mathĩra man.

About this time a man called Ndegwa wa Rũmere caused Gĩtere's village to be wiped out. His stock had been taken from him by Gĩtere's son, so he made a pact with the Maasai and guided them to Gĩtere's village by night. They set fire to the village, plundered all the stock, and killed all the people.

Long ago, long before the coming of the foreigners, there was a seer called Mũgo wa Hinga, and he was renowned throughout the land. He was the person who 'prophesied the meat of goats and sheep', that is to say, he prophesied many important events that were to come.

One of the great things he prophesied in those days, and which has now come to pass, was that there would come to this country a white race, with clothes as white as butterfly wings, and having taken to the skies at one place they would come to ground again at a distant one.

The railway reached this district a little before the great famine, and the people whom we saw digging the route for it were Indians. When the railway reached the borders of our country the foreigners increased greatly in numbers, and they began to build a village for themselves at the place which we called Kĩĩnũ-inĩ (Nairobi), and we used to trade with them there.

The chief cause of the great famine that we call 'the Famine of Europe' (*Ng'aragu ya Rũraya*) was that these numerous foreigners bought up great quantities of food to send further west where they were making the railway route. Then when the short rains failed and the famine began it increased very rapidly because the food from our previous harvest had been too rapidly dissipated.

At the time of that famine there were many foreigners here, including many Indians and Europeans in Nairobi. The first European to introduce education to our country was the one we used to call Kabũra, the Reverend A. W. McGregor. First of all he settled at Fort Smith, then he came down to Kabete, met Cege Kanyi, and asked Cege if he would sell him a piece of land. Cege consulted us, who were members of the family, as to whether we agreed to do so or not, and we agreed. Soon after that our family sold him the little piece of our estate that is now called C.M.S., Kabete, and we sold it for about 43 goats and sheep.

Then that European left Fort Smith, and came and built on this land, (p.33) and started teaching those boys who came to him, and many boys went to him to learn, my boys among them.

From that time the state of things began to change more and more rapidly, and ceased to be at all like it was in the olden days. The country became like a new country that was unknown to us, and one of the things that caused the

most serious trouble was the way in which we began to have our lands taken away from us by the White Government, and that started to happen after my people began to seek education.

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Chapter 2 - The Kikuyu Country

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Introduction

For the reasons outlined in the Preface of this book, I have confined my study to that section of the Kikuyu tribe which lives on the south side of the Chania River. We must now examine, briefly, the nature of the country with which we are concerned.

The Boundaries

Having thus limited our study, the Chania River becomes automatically the northern boundary. The Chania rises on the south-western slopes of the Aberdare Range and flows in a south-easterly direction until it joins the Thika River near the present Thika township. The head waters of the River are in dense forest, and not in Kikuyu country properly speaking, but the Southern Kikuyu definitely regarded the whole river, from its source to its junction with the Thika, as their northern boundary.

From the head waters of the Chania the old south-western boundary ran towards Kijabe Hill and thence followed a somewhat irregular line in a southerly direction up to a point a mile or two south-west of the Ũndirĩ Swamp, near Kikuyu Railway Station. The line of this boundary is not easy to fix exactly, since its position varied from year to year.

At the time with which we are concerned, the last decade of the nineteenth century, the Kikuyu were rapidly expanding their borders in this direction by buying land from the Ndorobo landowners. As new estates were bought by individual Kikuyu or by family groups, they were incorporated into the area which could properly be described as Kikuyu country (see Chapter 4).

As the Kikuyu were an illiterate people, they possessed no documentary evidence as to the extent of boundaries at any given time. I have been forced, therefore, to seek some other means of ascertaining the (p.35) approximate limits of South Kikuyu country at the end of the last century.

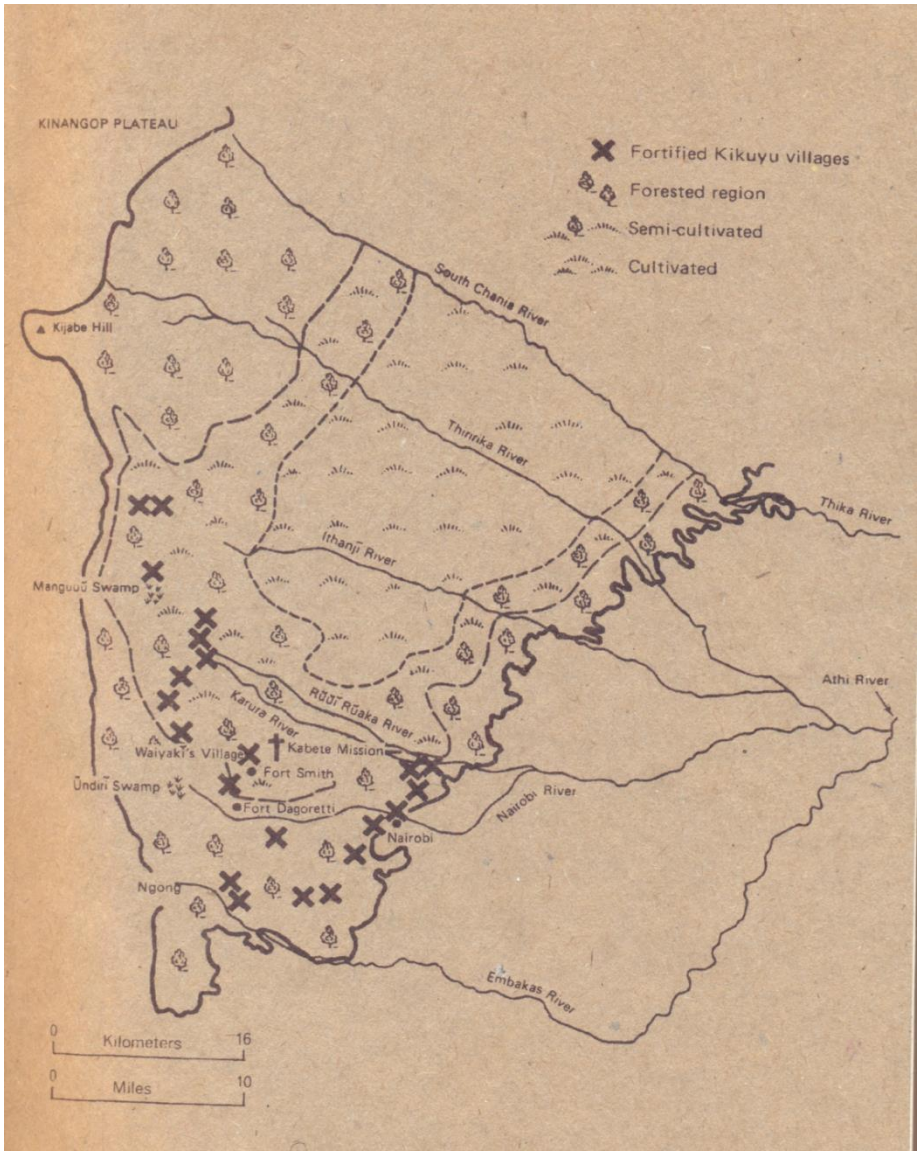
The task was made easier than it otherwise would have been because the Kikuyu always built fortified villages along their borders, and as the Kikuyu bought up new areas, villages that had formerly been fortified were allowed to change status and become unfortified villages. The task of protecting the frontiers then fell upon the inhabitants of the fortified villages on the more recently acquired estates, which, for the time being, lay nearest to the frontier.

Accordingly, I selected a year which stands out in Kikuyu history, the year when one of the Kikuyu leaders, Waiyaki, was sent into exile (see Chapter 1). To determine the position of the fortified villages in that year (1892) with as little risk as possible of doubt and error, I made enquiries from a number of independent senior elders who had been warriors at that time. I asked them to describe to me verbally the positions of the principal fortified villages along the boundary from the region of Kijabe to Ũndirĩ Swamp.

Having obtained these verbal descriptions, together with the names of some of the men who were warriors at that time and members of the garrisons concerned, I went out with these men to be shown the exact positions of the more important of these fortified villages (*ihingo*). In some cases I was taken to sites that were covered by cultivation, in others to places which had been incorporated by the British Government into areas of forest reserve. At times I was led into bush land or pasture land. In almost every case, however, I found that there was evidence which could be used to check the accuracy of the claims.

The Kikuyu custom was to have one, or sometimes two main entrances to a fortified village (*kĩhingo*), on either side of which deep pits were dug, staked at the bottom, and carefully covered over, so that if an enemy made a rush upon the entrance, a fair proportion of them would fall into these staked, hidden pits and be impaled there. In almost every case, when I was shown where the main entrance of such a village had been, I was able to find faint but distinct traces of these silted-up pits on either side of it.

The population of a fortified village always placed its refuse and the sweepings of the individual homesteads within its bounds on a series of mounds and middens. At first none of these could be located, for in the course of over forty years they had become overgrown, and reduced in size by the general decay of the rubbish within. However, after a little practice I found that one could nearly always locate slight mounds, and on digging into them it was possible to determine whether they marked the sites of old middens. In practically every case in which I (p.36) was taken to the alleged site of a fortified village dating back to the time of Waiyaki's exile, I was able to locate the position of the fortified entrances and of a number of the middens.



I had taken precautions to obtain a number of quite independent statements as to the situation of the various fortified villages I visited, and this, combined with the fact that I was taken to them by men who had not heard those descriptions, made me feel sure that I was shown the right places.

From all Kikuyu accounts, the people living in these fortified villages had both grazing land (*nganatha*) and a proportion of their cultivation beyond the fortified villages. On the accompanying map, therefore, I have not only shown the position of some of the more important fortified villages in the year of Waiyaki's exile (1892), but I have also drawn a line a little beyond that which joins these ascertained points to represent the approximate position of the boundary. It may be assumed with certainty that all land within the line joining the various forts was Kikuyu territory at that time, although in the border areas only a small proportion would have been under cultivation. A mile or two on the inward side of this line, however, the country was much more densely populated and intensively cultivated.

In the next chapter, dealing with the history of the Kikuyu in the latter part of the nineteenth century, extracts from the accounts of a number of early travellers are given. These confirm, to a large extent, the statement I have just made as to the density of population and extent of cultivation inside the so-called forest fringe. What seems to have escaped the notice of the early travellers is the fact that the forest fringe, or forest protective belt was itself inhabited, containing at intervals a whole series of fortified villages. The failure of the travellers to notice these fortified villages is not actually surprising, for the Kikuyu took care to place the fortified villages away from the main pathways through the forest. Moreover, they would, by their own accounts, have been careful not to reveal them to travellers, or to members of trading caravans. In spite of the fact that these

fortified villages are not mentioned by early travellers such as Teleki and Jackson, there are many passages in the earliest books which seem very strongly to support the Kikuyu contention that these fortified villages existed. A characteristic passage is the following from Thomson's book (1895), describing his travels in 1883:

> After a couple of hours' careful march (from Ngongo Bagas) along the interlacing roads we reached a place supposed to be near the Wa-Kikuyu. In response to a thundering volley from our guns, hundreds of natives sprang suddenly into view. . . They had evidently been swarming in the woods all the time . . . (p.311)

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From this and similar passages it is clear that the Kikuyu were living in the forests as well as in the much more developed land within the forest fringe, for at the firing of guns by parties who were on the main paths leading through the forest, many of them immediately appeared, and came with goods to sell. The Kikuyu themselves say that they had big fortified villages a little way off the main paths and well hidden, and that it was their custom when they heard guns fired to take it as a signal from traders, and at once go out to sell them food.

Had the Kikuyu not had many villages with large populations inside the forest fringe, the firing of guns in the forest could hardly have caused "many Kikuyu" to come together at once, bringing food for sale, a thing which is recorded as happening again and again in the early travel books.

In the above account I have been somewhat diverted from the subject of the boundaries. The above was written to show that the boundary included at least a part of the forest and was not on the inside edge of the forest, as has been suggested (Report of the Kenya Land Commission).

On the south, at the time of Waiyaki's exile, the boundary ran from a point a mile or so south-west of Ũndirĩ Swamp in a generally eastward direction to the present position of the city of Nairobi.

The plains on which Nairobi Railway Station and the commercial area which have since been built were not undisputed Kikuyu territory, for the Maasai also sometimes grazed their cattle there. "The Hill" area of Nairobi, however, as well as the suburbs known as Parklands, Muthaiga, Karen, and Langata were unquestionably within the Kikuyu boundary. This is established by the fact that many independent Kikuyu witnesses, who were warriors at the time of Waiyaki's exile, testify to the following facts. There were two fortified villages in the woods near State House known as *Kĩhingo kĩa Waihũmbũ* and *Kĩhingo kĩa Ngemengo;* there were also two on Museum Hill near the present position of the National Museum and Ngara Road (these were known as *Kĩhingo kĩa Mũthondu* and *Kĩhingo kĩa Nyanduru*); there was a fortified village in what is now known as "The City Park"; there were two more in the region now occupied by the Muthaiga Country Club and Golf Course; another was near what is now the Nairobi Cemetery; and another between Karen House and the Karen Golf Club.

From the present position of Nairobi the eastern boundary of Kikuyu country ran in a generally north-easterly direction to the point where the Chania and the Thika Rivers meet. The approximate positions of the more important fortified village along the southern part of this line are shown on the accompanying map.

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Neighbouring Tribes

On the northern boundary of the area we are considering there lived another section of the Kikuyu tribe. These, the Central Kikuyu, were the ancestors of all those who moved southwards across the Chania River to form, in time, a separate unit with customs differing in many important respects

from those of their ancestors. Friendly relations with these neighbours were continually maintained, and were reflected not only in a very considerable trade, but in the fact that the people of the two sections always performed together the most important ceremony of Kikuyu social life, namely, the *ituĩka* ceremony (the handing over of tribal responsibility from one ruling age-group to the other), which took place approximately every thirty years (see Chapter 29).

Many Kikuyu families south of the Chania River maintained contacts with their families in the Central or Fort Hall district, and made periodic visits to the homes of their ancestors. Occasional fights between the Kikuyu north of the Chania and those south of it took place, but there was never a state of real war between the two areas, and cattle raiding by either party across the Chania was never indulged in.

Along the eastern and southern boundaries of Kikuyu country lived a section of the Maasai tribe. This tribe was a purely pastoral one, practising no form of agriculture whatsoever, and, like all pastoral peoples having no permanent settlements, they wandered about the country with their flocks and herds seeking good pasture and water.

The Maasai were an ethnic group quite distinct from the Kikuyu, and their language was as dissimilar as German and Greek. The customs, too, of the Maasai differed considerably from those of the Kikuyu, but there were certain remarkable similarities, probably due to the fact that Maasai and Kikuyu had been in contact over a long period of time and had mutually influenced each other in a number of different ways.

Between the Maasai and the Kikuyu a traditional hostility seems to have prevailed for a very long time, but in spite of this there were frequent periods of peace when the two tribes made solemn treaties (see Chapter 24), lived harmoniously side by side, visited each others' areas, and even intermarried.

The family of Lenana, the paramount chief of the Maasai in the southern area, was of Kikuyu origin, and traced its ancestry to the *Anjirũ* clan of the Kikuyu, so that in a sense it could be said that the (p.39) Kikuyu ruled the Maasai. This, however, was not strictly true, since Lenana and his family had become so absorbed into Maasai life that they had the interests of the Maasai more at heart than those of the Kikuyu. At the same time, the fact that the Southern Maasai were ruled by a family of Kikuyu origin, and a family, moreover, that kept in fairly close contact with the Kikuyu branch of their family, was a matter of no little importance. It explains the many peace treaties that were made with the Maasai, and the fact that a trade agreement was made and adhered to even in time of war.

Long periods of friendship between the two tribes, and the attendant intermarriage, led to the borrowing of many ideas by each tribe from the other. A result of this influence was the Kikuyu adoption of the Maasai word for God (Ngai), and much of the Maasai conception of the deity, which they tacked on to their own religion of ancestor worship (see Chapter 25). The Maasai for their part borrowed both customs and words from the Kikuyu. Among other examples we may cite, is the Maasai adoption of the word *thingira*, though they applied it to a circumcision lodge for males only, whereas in Kikuyu it indicated a male sleeping hut. Another example of Maasai borrowing was their use of the Kikuyu custom of taking snuff instead of chewing tobacco, which was their normal method of employing this herb.

The other neighbours of the Kikuyu were the Akamba to the southeast and east. This tribe was closely related to the Kikuyu both in language and custom. There seems little doubt, in fact, that

in the past the Akamba and the Kikuyu were one and the same people who subsequently divided, and in the course of time, by gradual differentiation, became distinct tribes.

In spite of the closer ethnic relationship between the Kikuyu and the Akamba, the Kikuyu were on less friendly terms with the Akamba than with the Maasai, and no treaties or trade agreements were ever made with the Akamba. The customs of the Akamba have been described by G. Lindblom in his monograph on that tribe, and can thus be readily compared and contrasted with those of the Kikuyu.

The Wandorobo were also, in a sense, neighbours of the Kikuyu, but they were less organised than the other tribes, and as a forest-dwelling people were seldom encountered by the Kikuyu except as individuals and families. The Kikuyu were on good terms with the Wandorobo during the period with which we are concerned. As we shall see in Chapter 4, many Wandorobo and Kikuyu performed mutual adoption ceremonies; intermarriage, too, was common. Furthermore, all the land occupied by the Southern Kikuyu had been bought from the Wandorobo, piecemeal.

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Altitude and Climate

The country within the boundaries described above, ranged in altitude from a little over 8,000ft at the highest part to around 5,000ft in the extreme easterly corner of the area, the general slope of the country having been in a south-easterly direction. As a result of this variation in altitude, the climate over South Kikuyu was not uniform, and the more westerly parts of the country were much colder than those the south-east.

In the higher regions it was by no means uncommon to have frost a night, especially during the cold season in June, July, and the first part of August. In the lower regions frost was not known. This fact had a considerable bearing upon crop distribution, certain crops never having been grown successfully in the higher regions since they could not resist frost. In general the climate was temperate, and during the greater part of the year the shade temperatures, even in the middle of the day, seldom rose above 80°F (c. 27°C). In the higher altitudes such temperatures were rare even during the hottest seasons of the year.

During the cold season it was not unusual for the sky to be overcast throughout the day, and morning mist and fog often lasted until nearly noon, especially in the higher parts of the country. Nights were cold throughout South Kikuyu country, except during the very hottest period, when they were warm and muggy in the lower regions. This fact was reflected in the Kikuyu method of hut building, which was designed for great warmth at night (see Chapter 5).

Rainfall

Rainfall in Kikuyu country was to some extent dependent upon the altitude, so that the higher regions received a far more liberal annual mean rainfall than those in the south-eastern end of the area.

In normal years there were two distinct rainy seasons, known to the Kikuyu as *mbura ya mwere* (the rains of the bulrush millet) and *mbura ya njahĩ* (the rains of the *njahĩ* bean). The former, which started towards the middle of October, seldom lasted more than six weeks while the latter usually started towards the end of March and lasted to the end of May, or even longer.

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It should be noted, however, that these two rainy seasons were not regular, and probably never had been since the time when the Kikuyu first came into the country, and from time to time one or both of them would fail completely, with dire consequences to the population.

Water Supply

To an agricultural people such as the Kikuyu, a good water supply was essential, especially since the rainy seasons were separated from each other by hot, dry months, which were the times of harvest, when it was essential for the population to remain where they were and not have to go great distances in search of water. Fortunately, not only was there an abundance of rivers and streams running through the country, but also many excellent springs. Water was therefore abundant all the year round.

In the neighbouring Maasai country this was not equally true, and in times of drought it was customary for the Maasai to bring their vast herds of cattle to drink at the watering-places lying along the edge of Kikuyu country. These included the Manguuũ Swamp east of Limuru Station, the Ũndirĩ Swamp near Kikuyu Station, and the Kiambu Swamp near the administrative headquarters of that name. During times of peace the Maasai could bring their cattle to these watering-places freely, and they often camped within Kikuyu territory. In times of war, however, if the Maasai wished to use these watering-places the cattle had to be escorted by sufficiently large bands of Maasai warriors to ensure that the Kikuyu would not attack.

Soil

The part of the Kikuyu country with which we are concerned was mainly covered by soil and rock of volcanic origin. Except in the swamps and *vleis*, the soil was a deep red colour due to the breakdown of volcanic tuffs and various types of lava. This soil was extremely fertile, in part because the whole land had been under a thick mantle of timber and bush before the Kikuyu bought it from the Wandorobo.

In the valleys and swamps, black soil, largely comprised of decayed vegetation, was found. This was particularly fertile and especially suited to such crops as sugar-cane and edible arum.

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Over most of the country the depth of soil was great, and in most areas, pits of forty feet or more could be dug without reaching bed-rock.

In the western part of the country the uplift of the earth's crust that formed the Great Rift Valley resulted in the reversal of a number of streams, with a consequent silting up of the valleys and the formation of broad, flat swamps and *vleis*. The same uplift movements increased the tilt of the eastern part of the country, and caused the rivers and streams to have a steeper gradient and deep cut valleys. The material eroded from this deepening process was transported to the area along the eastern border of Kikuyu, where the hills tail off into the real plains country, and here the eroded material was deposited in the old valleys as the impetus of the increased gradient was lost. Thus in the extreme eastern part of the country the valleys were greatly silted up, forming swamps with a heavy growth of papyrus.

The numerous streams flowing into the swampy places in the eastern half of the district originated in an area of lava and volcanic ashes; consequently, they were rich in soda in solution. In the swamps the processes of evaporation led to concentrations of soda in the soil, and this soda impregnated soil formed a valuable asset to the Kikuyu, who used it extensively as a "salt lick" for their stock, calling it *mũũnyũ*.

Minerals

Apart from this soda earth, and the natural rocks, which the Kikuyu did not utilise for any purpose until the Europeans taught them its value for building, South Kikuyu had few minerals of any economic value, with one exception. This was iron ore, of which there were vast deposits in the form of lateritic murram. From this, as we shall see, the Southern Kikuyu derived a large amount of iron to make into spearheads, swords, axes, etc. (see Chapter 9).

Red ochre of poor quality was present, and also pot clay, but such essential minerals as soda for human use, good quality red ochre, and diatomite had to be obtained by trade.

Flora

Kikuyu country had a rich and varied flora, including many valuable timber trees and a large variety of fibre plants. The Kikuyu elders had (p.43) a wide knowledge of the botany of their country and had names for some four or five hundred different plants and herbs. They also had a considerable knowledge of the properties of many plants, from which they derived many drugs and herbal remedies. A wide variety of plants were also used in connection with magical rites and ceremonies. In the Botanical Appendix there is a list of those plants which the Kikuyu used for one purpose or another.

The Kikuyu practice of building their hut walls with thick planks meant the cutting down of many timber trees, but at the same time it led to the valuable habit of making forest reserves within the country. These were in the form of islands of forest, ranging in size from a few acres to many square miles, which were set aside deliberately for timber cutting only. The trees in these areas could not be felled to make room for cultivation.

The fact that Kikuyu country ranged in altitudes from about 5,000-8,000ft or more, meant that there was a considerable variation in the flora of different parts of the country. Bamboos, for instance, were to be found only in the very highest parts, while papyrus swamps were restricted to the lower regions. Both of these plants were of economic importance to the Kikuyu, the one for making hollow containers in which to store such things as feather head-dresses, and the other for making "papyrus salt". The limited distribution of these and other economic plants led naturally to internal trade, and was a factor in the formation of recognised tracks and paths all over the country. There was, indeed, a regular network of public footpaths known as *njĩra cia agendi* (literally, the paths of the travellers).

The red soil and the normally plentiful rainfall made Kikuyu country one of extreme fertility. As we shall see in the chapter on Agriculture (Chapter 6), the Kikuyu took full advantage of these facts and cultivated a great variety of crops. All the early travellers were particularly struck by the extent of Kikuyu cultivation, and by the apparently inexhaustible supply of vegetable produce which could be obtained for the re-victualling of caravans whose stores had been depleted by the long march from the coast.

Population Density

It is unfortunately not easy to arrive at an exact figure as regards the population density of South Kikuyu during the last two decades of the nineteenth century, there having been no written records. Any (p.44) estimate that we make depends considerably upon the exact year that we choose, for a number of factors affected the population considerably.

The Kenya Land Commission of 1932, after examining the available evidence, came to the conclusion that in 1902 the population density of the Kiambu Reserve (that is, of South Kikuyu) was in the region of 150 to the square mile, while the population of those parts that were alienated to European settlers was computed to have been 73 to the square mile.

In trying to obtain some idea of the population density as it was in the last two decades of the nineteenth century we must make use of the figures put forward for 1902, remembering that they are probably very conservative estimates, and represent the lowest figures at which the density in that year could be placed.

From Kikuyu oral history, and from the published statements of men who travelled in South Kikuyu from 1887 onwards, we can be absolutely certain that the population was formerly much greater, and that in the four years 1899-1902, it was at the lowest point to which it had sunk for a long time. Let us briefly examine the evidence supporting this statement.

In 1892 a severe outbreak of smallpox occurred in Maasai country to the south of the Kikuyu boundary, and it rapidly spread into Kikuyu country, killing large numbers of people. In some cases whole villages of 300 or 400 people were wiped out completely, and those who, in desperation, abandoned their homes and moved elsewhere often took the germ of the disease with them and infected new areas. The mortality rate was particularly high among young people, and it is not unreasonable to assume that from five to ten per cent of the population in 1892 died as a result of this smallpox epidemic. The figure may have been even higher.

In the years that followed the building of the Government Station of Fort Smith, the officials of the time carried out a number of sanguinary raids upon many important Kikuyu villages as "retaliation" for the murder of porters and mail runners. Although the murders almost certainly were committed by bands of irresponsible warriors anxious to blood their spears, the punishment meted out often consisted of "frightening the enemy" by shooting at their massed armies, a form of wholesale slaughter with which the Kikuyu could not cope, as they were armed only with swords, spears, and bows. Punishment also consisted of burning and pillaging the homes and villages of the people. As a result of this severe treatment many innocent victims had their villages burned to the ground and their cattle and sheep (p.45) driven off, and they often fled temporarily to Central Kikuyu, north of the Chania River, leaving only a few representatives to look after their family estates.

Following closely the period of "retaliation raids" by the European immigrants, came the severe famine of 1898-1899. So severe was this famine that hundreds upon hundreds of Kikuyu in South Kikuyu died, while still greater numbers went off to Central and North Kikuyu where the drought had not been so severe and food was still obtainable.

The combined result of these various disasters from 1892-1899 was that the population of South Kikuyu became reduced by almost 40 per cent. It seems, therefore, not unreasonable to maintain that just prior to 1892, when the smallpox outbreak initiated the series of disasters I have just mentioned, the population of South Kikuyu was probably in the neighbourhood of 250 to the square mile.

Such a high figure is supported by the accounts of travellers prior to 1892, which give the impression of a densely populated, intensively cultivated land. Writing of his journey into South Kikuyu in 1887, von Höhnel states (1894):

> From the picturesque little groves still left rose columns of smoke, betraying the presence of native settlements, whilst all around them as far as the eye could reach stretched well-cultivated, undulating pasture-lands, which were a revelation to us, explaining the ease with which the Wakikuyu can supply the needs of the largest caravans. (Vol. 1, p.302).

A year or two later, at the beginning of 1889, Frederick Jackson marched through South Kikuyu, from a point near what is now the Muthaiga suburb of Nairobi, towards Kijabe.

He wrote (1930) of this journey:

> During the next six days when passing through the densely populated and highly cultivated areas to the inner edge of the forest belt . . . the people were most friendly (p.170).

One year later, in 1890, when F. D. Lugard camped on the site of what later became Fort Smith, he wrote (1893):

> The cultivation in Kikuyu is prodigiously extensive; indeed, the whole country may be said to be under tillage. (Vol. 1, p.328).

There is little doubt that the population of those times was not at all evenly distributed over Kikuyu country, owing to the rules of Kikuyu land tenure (Chapter 4). This matter is discussed in more detail in the chapter on this subject, but it will be useful to note here that the whole of South Kikuyu was divided up into family owned private estates and (p.46) that land was not communally owned. As a result some estates were very sparsely populated because the landowning families were not always large and they did not always like tenants on their land. In fact, some landowners deliberately kept large parts of their estate as bush land for the grazing of goats, which prefer bush to grass. Others made large forest reserves as we have seen.

On the map which I have provided to illustrate this chapter, I have indicated the boundaries of Kikuyu country as they were in 1892, as determined by the position of the fortified villages which then surrounded the country. It must be clearly understood that the population density in the boundary region was certainly not nearly as great as my estimates of 250 per square mile for South Kikuyu as a whole. Some of these fortified villages had as many as 600 to 1,000 resident warrior but for several miles around them there would have been no village at all.

Within the area included in the boundaries there were several large tracts of uninhabited forest which were the timber reserves of the Kikuyu people, and definitely a part of Kikuyu territory. There were also many islands of forest which had not been cleared for cultivation, but deliberately left in order that villages might be built inside the shelter they afforded, and that the bush and undergrowth of the forest might act as additional protection to their inhabitants. These islands of forest often had a far denser population than any other part of the country, a fact which was not always appreciated by the Europeans of the time.

Fauna

Kikuyu country during the last half of the nineteenth century had only a limited wild fauna over the greater part of it, but there was large animal population in the forest patches and on the grazing plains that surrounded the forest. In the forest buffalo, rhinoceros elephant, and forest pig were common, as well as several species of monkey, while the plains and forest glades were the home of antelope gazelle, zebra, and other animals. In the interior of Kikuyu country game was rare except for such bush animals as bushbuck, reedbuck duiker, and dik-dik.

Of *Carnivora*, the hyena was the commonest species, and the Kikuyu method of disposal of their dead encouraged their presence. Leopards were common, and lions, occasionally found in the

interior, were (p.47) common on the outer edge of the forest belt. Small carnivores such as wild cats, civets, mongoose, genets, and jackals were common. The Kikuyu had a very reasonable knowledge of the natural history of their region, and had special names for almost every species of mammal found there, in addition to names for all the common types of birds, reptiles, and insects.

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Introduction

As a people without a written language, the Kikuyu had no history in the strict meaning of that word, so the story of their origin and development can be obtained only from their traditions, which become more and more vague the further back they go. A brief summary of traditions is, however, necessary before we pass on to study the history of the coming of the white man. This we can consider both from the written records of early European travellers, and from the stories told me by Kikuyu men and women who were still alive in 1939 and who retained a vivid memory of the events of major importance.

The Origin of the Tribe

According to Kikuyu tradition, the whole tribe is descended from one man and one woman who were created by God, and who were set down by their Creator at a place called Mũkũrũwe wa Gathanga. This is the Kikuyu version of the "Garden of Eden" story (*mũkũrũwe* or *mũkũrũe*, is the Kikuyu name for *Albizzia gummifera* and *Albizzia coriaria*), and the place is identified as being in the district now known as Fort Hall (Mũrang'a), north of the Chania River. The names of the Adam and Eve of the Kikuyu version of creation are Gĩkũyũ and Mũũmbi. The word Gĩkũyũ means "The Big Fig Tree," and it is from this that the Kikuyu tribe derives its name. The woman's name, Mũũmbi, means "The Creator".

Mũũmbi was the wife of Gĩkũyũ and had nine daughters (ten daughters – see the note underneath), but no sons. These nine (read ten) daughters are regarded as the ancestors of the nine (read ten) main Kikuyu clans, which are still named after them. The oldest daughter was Wanjirũ, the second Wambũi, the third Njeri (or Wanjeri), the fourth Wanjikũ, the fifth Nyambura (or Wakĩũrũ), the sixth Wairimũ (or Gathigia), the seventh Waithĩra (or Wangechi), the eighth Wangarĩ, and the ninth and last Wangũi (or Waithiegeni) (see the note for the daughter omitted).

[**Note**: The daughters of the Kikuyu and Mũmbi were ten not nine. The Kikuyu clans named after them are therefore ten not nine. The number nine – ten reduced by one – arises out of the Kikuyu custom of not counting people in exact numbers. It was a taboo to do so. The daughter omitted by the writer is Wamũyũ (or Warigia), the mother of the Kikuyu clan of Aicakamũyũ].

These nine (read ten) daughters each bore children (there are various versions [p.49] of how they obtained husbands), and their children intermarried. Gradually the tribe developed, with the children taking the names of their mother, the system being matrilineal and matrilocal. "They took

husbands and they bore children", sums up the Kikuyu tradition as to who were the husbands of the nine (read ten) daughters.

Plate 1. Three old men. Two are wearing traditional cloaks, one of sheepskin and one of goatskin. The third, wearing a blanket, is Kabetũ, whose story is told in chapter I, part II.

It is no doubt significant that in this tradition it was the women who took husbands, and not the men who took wives. This supports the view which can be based upon many minor customs even in Kikuyu life today—that the tribe was, originally, matrilineal.

It is also significant that although in many parts of Kikuyu country the species of fig tree used in recent times by the people as their sacred tree was the *mũgumo* (*Ficus natalensis* or *F. thonningii*), whenever a (*Ficus capensis* or *F. sycomorus*) was available it was chosen in preference to the former. This may be interpreted as an indication that formerly the sacred tree *par excellence* of the Kikuyu was the *mũkũyũ*, owing to its association with the male founder of the race. Perhaps the *mũgumo*, a different species of fig tree, was later adopted only because it was common, whereas the *mũkũyũ* was scarce in most areas. This subject will be further discussed in the chapter on religion.

The nine (read ten) clans founded by the nine (read ten) daughters of Mũũmbi and Gĩkũyũ are known by the following names. The clan founded by Wanjirũ, the eldest, is called the *Anjirũ*, that founded by Wambũi the *Ambũi*, that founded by Njeri the *Aceera*; that founded by Wanjikũ the *Agacikũ*; that founded by Nyambura the *Ambura* or the *Aĩthaga* (*Ethaga*); that founded by Wairimũ the *Airimũ* (or *Agathigia*); that founded by Wamũyũ the *Aicakamũyũ*; that founded by Waithĩra the *Aithĩrandũ*, that founded by *Wangarĩ* the *Angarĩ* or *Aithe-kahuno*, and, finally, that founded by Wangũi the *Angũi* or *Aithiegeni* (see the note below).

[**Note:** For ease of reading, the mix up of *Airimũ* (or *Agathigia*) and *Aicakamũyũ* in the original text of the paragraph above has been corrected. *Airimũ* and *Aicakamũyũ* are not alternative names of the same clan with the mother as Wairimũ as indicated. *Aicakamũyũ* are a different clan with their mother Wamũyũ (the daughter of Gĩkũyũ omitted as explained in the previous note)].

Plate 2. Entrance to a bedroom in a Kikuyu woman's hut.

Each of these nine (read ten) Kikuyu clans is called a *mũhĩrĩga*, and each of them has, in the course of years, become divided into a vast number of sub-clans (*mbarĩ*).

Today the allegiance of the individual is to the sub-clan rather than to the clan, yet every single Kikuyu knows which of the main nine (read ten) clans he belongs to.

The whole of Kikuyu country, in the course of time, became divided amongst the sub-clans, as the clans themselves have no territorial cohesion. On the other hand, the Kikuyu claim that in the immediate vicinity of Mũkũrũwe wa Gathanga, where the tribe originated, there are nine (read ten) plots of land which represent the original land holdings of the nine (read ten) daughters of Mũũmbi. This is a claim which I have not been able to verify, and as it concerns a district outside the area with which this volume deals, we need not concern ourselves with it unduly.

Plate 3. Three granaries.

In spite of the fact that early writers, such as C. W. Hobley writing (p.50) in (1906), and W. S. Routledge (1910), claim that the Kikuyu main clans were totemic, I can find no positive evidence that this was ever the case, and I am certain that the information of these two authors is inaccurate, at least in so far as the Kikuyu south of the Chania are concerned. It is more or less certain that there are no totems for any of the clans today, but it is perhaps possible that there were totems in the distant past while the Kikuyu were still a hunting people. Some of the clan names strongly suggest this possibility. *Ngarĩ* means leopard, and there is a clan called the *Angarĩ* after the girl Wangarĩ, or Child of the Leopard. Similarly, the name Wairimũ, one of the nine(read ten) daughters of Mũũmbi, means Child of the Ogre, the name Nyambura Daughter of the Rain, the name Wambũi Daughter of the Zebra, etc. If, however, these names indicated that originally there were totems, it is quite certain that today the leopard is not the totem of the *Angarĩ* clan, nor the zebra of the *Ambũi* clan, nor rain of the *Ambura* clan. There is, however, a faint connection still between, the *Ambura* clan and rain, although it is not a totemic one, for members of the *Ambura* clan were said to have certain powers of preventing rain from falling, and limited powers as rain-makers. Routledge says that the members of the *Agacikũ* clan could not work iron, but, in fact, this clan produced a high proportion of smiths and smelters, so he must have been misinformed.

The Growth and Spread of the Tribe

In the course of time the descendants of the nine (read ten) daughters of Mũũmbi and Gĩkũyũ increased so much that there was no longer any room for them in the country round the Mũkũrũwe

wa Gathanga. Gradually, various members of the tribe moved away to find new land, set up their families, and thus found sub-clans.

Some sections of the tribe moved towards Mount Kenya, others moved east towards Donyo Sabuk, others moved west towards the Aberdare Range, while others went southwards until they came to the Chania River, where they halted.

Gradually the land just north of the Chania became overcrowded, and eventually a movement across the River started. It is not easy to say precisely when the first crossing of the Chania took place, but Kikuyu tradition places it at the time of the *Ciĩra* generation, and from a study of the Kikuyu generation system it would seem likely that this was somewhere about A.D. 1700.

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Plate 4. Woman carrying firewood.

When the Kikuyu began to enter the country south of the Chania River they found it occupied by a hunting tribe called the Wandorobo, and they proceeded to adopt members of this tribe and to buy land from them in the manner described in the chapter on land use (Chapter 4).

Penetration to the lands south of the River was slow, and by the time of the *Iregi* generation, *c*. 1860, it had reached only as far as the River called the Rũũĩ Rũaka. However, during the succeeding years the expansion was continued, and by 1887, when the first European entered South Kikuyu, they had extended their occupation of the forest lands to the edge of Maasai country near the Ngong Hills. In 1887, Teleki described the Mbagathi River as the boundary between the Maasai and the Kikuyu, even though there were few Kikuyu in the extreme south, and the line of fortified villages which marked the effective border was then several miles from its banks.

According to Kikuyu tradition, when they moved into the forested country south of the Chania River, the Wandorobo were not the only inhabitants. It is said that there was also a tribe of dwarfs who were known to the Kikuyu as Agumba or Maitho a Ciana ("Children's Eyes"). Ndorobo tradition also speaks of these people, and there is little doubt that there was a very sparse population of a pygmy-like race living in the recesses of the forest. These people hid from both the Wandorobo and the Kikuyu. According to Kikuyu tradition, these Agumba lived in holes dug in the ground roofed over with sods, and there still exist shallow, saucer-shaped depressions which are, according to tradition**,** the former homes of these dwarfs. It seems highly likely that the Agumba

were a relic of a stone-age people who were still living in pit dwellings much as the Neolithic people of Kenya did *c*. 350 B.C. (See Leakey, 1939).

Routledge (1910) records that he excavated one of these alleged Agumba pit dwellings in 1902 and found some coarse pottery and some humanly flaked pieces of obsidian, as well as some hard seeds of the wild banana.

In 1926 I made an excavation with similar results. These cannot be regarded as conclusive, because it is not possible to prove that these pits were used by the Agumba of Kikuyu tradition rather than by a much earlier stone-age race. Two facts remain, however; tradition assigns these pits to the Agumba, and they certainly were human dwellings.

In modern times there can be found a few individuals among the Kikuyu who are of dwarf stature with features like those of the Congo pygmies. The Kikuyu of normal stature used to speak of such people as *andũ a rũruka rũa Agumba* (people of the stock of the Agumba).

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Kikuyu Tradition about Stock and Cultivated Plants

According to Kikuyu tradition their early ancestors were originally hunters, until one day when some of the women of the tribe were wandering in the forest and met goats coming towards them bleating. According to the story, these were ownerless, wild animals. The women were frightened and ran away, but reported the matter to their men-folk. The men went out to investigate, caught some of the young animals, and started to rear them. It became apparent that they could be easily domesticated, and eventually other men went and caught more until the wild stock was exhausted. When searching for wild goats and sheep in this manner, the men are said to have come across wild cattle which they caught and reared, thus becoming owners of cattle as well as of sheep and goats.

The value of this story as an historical account is doubtful, and yet I consider that it may contain a germ of truth. From a study of the Neolithic cultures of East Africa, we know that *c*. 850 B.C. stone-age man possessed cattle, sheep, and probably goats. We know too that the stone-age race that possessed these animals were a people who lived in pit dwellings. It is by no means out of the question that the Agumba were descendants, or an off-shoot, of these Neolithic stock-owners of an earlier period, and that the Agumba of Kikuyu tradition (who lived in holes in the ground in the forest glades) possessed a few goats, sheep, and cattle. The goats and sheep which, according to tradition, met the Kikuyu women in the forest and which they took to be wild animals may well have belonged to the Agumba.

As regards cultivated plants, Kikuyu tradition claims that some, such as millet and sugar-cane, were domesticated from wild stock, while the others were said to have been a special gift from heaven. The story goes that from time to time God would remove a man from his hut at night, taking him up through the roof, and when the man returned in a thunderstorm some days later, he arrived with a handful of seeds of various plants, such as beans and maize, and with an order from God that they had to be planted. The real source of the plants is a mystery, but some of the seed may have been obtained from other tribes and brought back by men who then claimed that they had been up to the abode of God to fetch them, thus enhancing their reputations, and, at the same time, explaining their absence.

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Contacts with Arabs and Swahilis

Prior to the coming of the first European expedition into Kikuyu country in 1887, the tribe had been in contact with both Arab and Swahili traders for some time and had been in the habit of selling them large quantities of food for their porters. The recognised custom was for the traders to make their camp near the north end of the Ngong Hills, close to the source of the Mbagathi River, and then to fire off their guns to let the Kikuyu who were living in the fortified villages in the forest belt know that they wanted to trade. As soon as the gun reports were heard, news was sent by messengers throughout the land, and people from all over South Kikuyu made their way to Ngong, taking with them maize, millet, sweet potatoes, and other food stuffs, to exchange for beads, copper wire, and cloth. The Kikuyu name for these Arab and Swahili traders was *thũkũmũ* (slave dealers and people who employed paid labour).

On one or two occasions the Arab and Swahili traders tried to penetrate Kikuyu country, but on each occasion they were attacked, their party more or less annihilated by the Kikuyu warriors, and all their trade goods and other possessions stolen. Slave raiders never succeeded in making Kikuyu country a field for their activities.

From the evidence of von Höhnel it seems that the Arabs occasionally bought a few slaves from the Kikuyu, but it is not clear whether these were prisoners whom the Kikuyu had captured from the Akamba, or whether they were poor Kikuyu who were sold by a wealthy man who had had them as his serfs or dependants (*ndungata*, see glossary). On the whole, it seems more probable that they were people of another tribe, for the Kikuyu liked to have a large population and would have been unlikely to sell their own people as slaves. On the other hand, the Akamba made a definite practice of raiding Kikuyu women and girls with the intention of selling them as slaves to the Arabs, and not a few Kikuyu were, therefore, taken to the coast as slaves through the agency of the Akamba.

Long before the Kikuyu established trade relations with the Arab and Swahili caravans, they had established the practice of trading agricultural produce with the Maasai in exchange for cattle, sheep, and hides. They also acquired from them beads and cloth, which the Maasai had obtained from the coastal traders, because of this, it was a well established Kikuyu practice to cultivate more land than was needed for local use in order to have surplus food for trade purposes. (p.54) When the caravans began to come to Ngong the practice was encouraged, and by the time the first Europeans arrived nearly all Kikuyu families were growing far more than they actually needed.

In order to conduct trade with the Maasai the Kikuyu made agreements with that tribe whereby the women of both groups were never molested when engaged in trade activities, even when the two tribes were at war. These agreements were always faithfully observed by both sides. Moreover, peace treaties were made from time to time between the Kikuyu and the Maasai, and during periods of peace the people of the two tribes mixed freely and visited each others' country. The Maasai were always particularly keen to make use of Kikuyu medicine-men and diviners, and it was due to this that the Kikuyu sub-clan known as *Mbarĩ a Gathirimũ* gradually obtained enormous power over the Kaputei Maasai, some members of this Kikuyu family eventually even becoming chiefs of this section of the Maasai tribe. The famous Maasai chief Lenana was the son of Mbatia, a Kikuyu. Mbatia was the son of Gathirimũ, and Lenana was the recognised chief of all the Kaputei Maasai at the time of the coming of the Europeans. The curious situation arose, therefore, that a pastoral people was ruled by a family from an agricultural tribe with whom they were constantly at war.

Contacts with the White Man

The Kikuyu were more than prepared for the coming of the Europeans by the prophesies of some of their diviners and prophets. These included one that, "White men will come soon with fire in their mouths", a prophecy which was true because the Europeans smoked cigarettes and pipes, and "breathed out smoke".

Plate 5. Kikuyu women and girls.

At first the Kikuyu were quite willing to be friendly with the Europeans, but the leaders of the territorial units were not able to restrain the desire of certain individuals to steal beads and other trade goods from them. Misunderstandings arose, and in the course of a few years friendship turned to hatred. For several years thereafter the Kikuyu took every opportunity to attack, kill, and plunder the Europeans who entered their land. In retaliation the, Europeans conducted many bloody attacks upon Kikuyu villages.

The story of the coming of the white man can best be told by extracts from the various books written by men who came into contact with the Kikuyu before 1900. These extracts are given here with notes to help make the whole story clearer and more illuminating.

p.55

The first European to give us any written account of South Kikuyu was Thomson, who did not actually penetrate the country, but skirted its edge. In his book (1885), dealing with the period 1883-1884, he wrote:

> Enormous quantities of sweet potatoes, yams, cassava, sugar cane, Indian corn, millet, etc., are raised, and the supply seems to be quite inexhaustable. On my return journey I found a caravan of over 1500 men staying at Ngongo, who remained there a month, and carried away little short of three months' provisions, yet it did not seem perceptibly to affect the supply or to raise the ridiculously low prices. Extremely fat sheep and goats abound, while they (the Kikuyu) have also cattle in considerable numbers, (p.307)

In this passage we have a remarkable confirmation of the claims made by the Kikuyu themselves that they grew a great deal of surplus agricultural produce for sale to the trade caravans and to the Maasai. Thomson here mentions cassava as one of the foods sold to traders, as well as sweet potatoes. This is certainly a mistake, for at that time the Kikuyu grew only a very little cassava, which they called *mũgwacĩ mũirũ*, and they did not regard it as a food plant. It was used only for its medicinal and magical properties. The Kikuyu did, however, grow a great variety of sweet potatoes, and the tubers of the species *mũita* have a strong superficial resemblance to cassava

tubers. It is probable, therefore, that Thomson mistook *mũita* potatoes for the cassava that he was accustomed to buy at the coast. He continues:

> The Masai have made repeated attempts to penetrate into the country, but they have found that the Wa-kikuyu were more than a match for them in their dense forests. They have failed on every occasion. Curiously enough, however, though they are eternally at war to the knife with each other, there is a compact between them not to molest the womenfolk of either party. Hence the curious spectacle is exhibited of Masai women wending their way with impunity to a Kikuyu village, while their relatives are probably engaged in a deadly fight close at hand. In the same way the Wa-kikuyu women frequently carry grain to Masai kraals to exchange for hides, (p.308)

Plate 6. Young Kikuyu woman.

This passage, written by a man who knew the Maasai well, as is shown by the whole of his book, and who was in the confidence of the Maasai of that time (1883-1884), proves it was no idle boast of the Kikuyu that the Maasai seldom succeeded in getting through the Kikuyu line of fortifications. These, as we have already seen, consisted of a chain of fortified villages set in the dense forest which was retained as a protective fringe around their country. This forest fringe, with its (p.56) extensive line of fortified villages, was the "Maginot Line" of the Kikuyu tribe.

The above passage of Thomson's also confirms the Kikuyu claim that they had trade agreements with the Maasai whereby the women of either tribe could trade freely and without fear of being molested even when the two tribes were at war. Thomson continues:

> After a couple of hours' careful march (from Ngongo) along the interlacing roads we reached a place supposed to be near the Wa-kikuyu. In response to a thundering volley from our guns, hundreds of natives sprang suddenly into view. . . They had evidently been swarming in the woods all the time, watching our movements and looking out for an opportunity to attack us. They now crowded round us; but seeing them look dangerous, we 'showed our teeth', and they precipitately retreated some distance. Going into the centre of the clearing, we arranged a plan of action—so many to buy, so many to carry to the central station, and over one-half to remain as a guard ready for any emergency . . . and we were enabled to return to camp laden with all sorts of good things.
>
> After this, matters improved considerably. The women (though never the men) came frequently down to the edge of the forest and disposed of their abundance to us. (p.311)

This passage is interesting, because although Thomson seems to have thought that the Kikuyu were hiding in the woods ready to attack, his subsequent remarks suggest that they must have come not from hiding in the woods but from a big village hidden in the woods, for soon after he fired the "thundering volley" he was engaged in trading for all sorts of food. When the Kikuyu heard the shots the natural reaction would have been to send out armed warriors from the village first, and when they found that it was a trading party wanting to buy food, the women from the village

would be called out. If they had simply been an armed party hiding in the woods waiting to attack, they would hardly have been accompanied by women with food supplies ready for trading!

In actual fact, there were a few elderly Kikuyu still living in 1939 who remembered the incident well, for this was the first white man, as distinct from an Arab, that they had ever seen. The approach of the trading party was noticed by scouts who reported to the fortified village in the forest, and when the volley was fired the warriors went out first, as they were not quite sure whether a white man would trade in the way that the Arabs had done.

The warriors crowded round because they wanted to "see" the white man at close quarters, but they were driven back. A little later an Arab accompanying Thomson announced that they wanted to (p.57) trade, and then the women were summoned from the nearby village with their food for sale.

Subsequently, as Thomson also records, the women of this and many other villages went down from time to time to a place beyond the forest belt to trade with the foreigners. The men did not go, for trading was a woman's occupation; no men who went trading were safe from Maasai attacks. The Maasai at that time were camped near Thomson, and if the Kikuyu warriors had gone it would have been a signal for the Maasai to attack them.

After Thomson, the next European to visit the southern edge of Kikuyu territory was Bishop Hannington, who later lost his life in Uganda, and to whose records, if any, this writer had no access. After him came Teleki and von Höhnel, in 1887. Unlike Thomson, they did not merely skirt Kikuyu country, but went right through it towards Mount Kenya, intending to pass on to Lake Baringo. This expedition reached Ngongo Bagas on August 27th, 1887, and the account of the journey through South Kikuyu is so full of information of historical importance that I propose to quote from it at some length:

> On August 27th (1887) we reach Ngongo Bagas, or the spring of Bagas, an important camping-place on the borders of Masailand and Kikuyu. We are now on the eastern side of the Doenye Lamuyo, and the neighbourhood was more hilly. The latter part of our march here had been partly between luxuriant woods and partly across beautiful meadows, or over little watercourses fringed with soft green grass, all alike presenting a marked and delightful contrast to the dreary waterless plateau of the Kapotei.
>
> We met very few Masai, and only saw natives in any number when we passed two kraals at the edge of the wood, from which a crowd of men, moran and moruu, women and children, rushed out to see us pass, chattering, laughing, and screaming. Many of the women brought eleusine meal, tobacco, sugar cane, etc., which they had got from the Kikuyu, and offered to sell them to us, but we hastened on without stopping as everyone saw the longed-for spring of Bagas behind the next hill. It was not however until near mid-day that we really came to it, and found that it issued from a shallow cleft overgrown with rushes. We camped upon a flat rugged hill, having now come to a very important stage in our journey. Our march through Masailand was over and we stood upon the threshold of Kikuyuland, on the eve of a time full of trial and adventure. (Vol. 1, p.284)

It is clear from this passage that Ngongo Bagas was regarded as being on the frontier of Kikuyu country, and although the Kikuyu villages were several miles on, the land on the north-west side of the (p.58) Mbagathi River was regarded by travellers in 1887 as "Kikuyuland". He continues:

> Before our arrival little was really known about the land of the people of Kikuyu, with the result that countless tales were afloat of the fierceness and hostility of the natives. A caravan from Mombasa, it was said, had attempted, a few years ago, to enter Kikuyu from the east, and had been destroyed. Since then no traders had dared to venture within range of the poisoned arrows, which natives hidden in the dense woods were reputed to shoot at every intruder in their land. And two of the men with us assured us that Dr G. Fischer had had to fight every inch of his way when he crossed this redoubtable district somewhere in the north, on his way to the coast

> from Kavirondo. Moreover the Masai had shaken their heads when we spoke of our intentions, so that there seemed reason enough for us to change our minds about going to Kenia by way of Kikuyu. (p.287)

In this passage von Höhnel confirms the Kikuyu claim that the Arab traders did not dare to penetrate Kikuyu country, because the few caravans that had tried to do so had been wiped out. Fischer's route is not certain, but so far as is known he did not enter South Kikuyu. Having entered North Kikuyu somewhere near Nyeri, he had cut across the country and into the plains towards Ũkamba as quickly as possible, as he found the North Kikuyu very hostile.

Referring to the question of food supplies available on the edge of Kikuyu country, von Höhnel tells us:

> We had, however, no need to be anxious about provisions. Even large caravans such as ours could easily, in normal seasons, buy food for several months of the Wakikuyu in a very short time. There are no markets exactly like those in other parts of Africa, as the Wakikuyu do not venture out of the forests from fear of the Masai, and caravans have to seek them. A well-armed contingent from a travelling party goes into the woods and calls the attention of the natives by firing two or three shots. In a few minutes the signal is answered by the appearance of some envoys; a time and spot are fixed on for the holding of a market, and in due course the traders make their way to the rendezvous, soon joined by hundreds of men and women laden with the superfluous produce of their fields, which they are very glad to dispose of. . . .
>
> When our camp was pitched we too sent fifty men under Tom Charles, and a few of Jumbe Kimemeta's Askari to the Wakikuyu to open negotiations, and rather late in the evening they returned, reporting that they had reached a stream where they found an old man, to whom they gave a little present, telling him they wished to buy food. He told them to remain where they were and he would send some. After several hours of vain waiting some of our men got impatient, and with the consent of (p.59) Tom Charles, who, in fact, had not sufficient control over them, penetrated further into the wood. In the course of an hour they came to a dearing, where they met natives carrying food. They had bought a considerable quantity when they noticed that the numbers of the Wakikuyu were rapidly increasing, became frightened and took to their heels, firing two shots to frighten the natives and so aid their own escape. The rest of the men, who had stopped by the stream, had also been able to buy food, and had returned home quite quietly, bringing it with them.
>
> Tom Charles had managed very badly in his attempt to smooth matters for us, and so we had to send out another contingent the next day. Fortunately an old Masai woman, named Nakairo, who was held in high esteem by the Wakikuyu, happened to be in the camp when our fugitives ran in, and she offered to be an intermediary between us and the natives. It is a noteworthy fact that the women of both sides are always perfectly safe, in spite of the constant feud between the Masai and Wakikuyu, and knowing this we appointed the old lady our diplomatic agent, (p.289)

This woman, called Nakairo, by von Höhnel, is almost certainly the very well-known woman Nyakairũ. She was a halfbreed Maasai-Kikuyu and was widely known as a *hinga*, or woman who spoke both languages fluently, and who acted as intermediary between the Maasai and Kikuyu in such matters as negotiating the ransom of female prisoners captured on raids. She also frequently acted as a guide to Kikuyu trading parties, and led them to distant Maasai kraals.

Through the mediation of Nyakairũ, Teleki's party was able to have a meeting with a number of Kikuyu leaders, and to negotiate with them for permission to enter Kikuyu territory. The following passage describes what happened:

> The next morning Nakairo went to the Wakikuyu accompanied by Qualla. She did not intend to stop by the stream this time, but to lay our wishes before the assembled Samaki of the land. . . .
>
> The negotiations with the natives went on very smoothly this time. Qualla knew well how to inspire confidence by his own assured demeanour, and at his very first interview he got so far as to make blood brotherhood with several Wakikuyu. This ceremony takes place thus. A sheep is killed, the liver only is cooked and eaten by the brothers that are to be. (p.291 *et seq*).

Qualla, the Arab mentioned in this passage, was known to the Kikuyu as Rũara, and the Kikuyu have always believed that he was the leader of Teleki's expedition, and that the two Europeans were his assistants. This idea arose from the fact that it was invariably Rũara (Qualla) who performed the "ceremony of blood-brotherhood". This ceremony (p.60) was never performed according to pure Kikuyu custom. In the form described by von Höhnel, in fact it would not rank with the Kikuyu as "blood-brotherhood" at all, and the idea of cutting out the liver and eating it was not theirs, but a custom brought in and insisted upon by the Arab.

Probably one of the reasons why the Kikuyu so freely broke these oaths was that they were foreign, and taken in an uncustomary manner, so that they were not considered really binding. Had the early travellers known and made use of the ceremony of mutual adoption as practised between the Kikuyu and the Wandorobo, or the ceremony of peace making as used between the Kikuyu and Maasai, they would have had far less trouble (see Chapter 4).

The word *samaki* used in the above passage by von Höhnel is his version of the Kikuyu word *athamaki*. This, as we shall see in subsequent chapters in this volume, is a. word which means rulers. There were different types of *athamaki*, and the ones with whom Teleki's party came to terms were the *athamaki a njama* (rulers of the armies). He continues:

> Soon came the good tidings that we were free to go through Kikuyuland, but we must first make a treaty of peace. We agreed to this at once, and Qualla and Kijanja with a few men hastened to the place indicated, where they found a few old men waiting for them. When the endless speechifying customary to such occasions was over, our men were told that we were now welcome to enter their land ... (p.292)

Here again we see the mistake made by the Europeans. They sent Qualla and another Arab to make peace with the elders, rather than going themselves, whereby the idea that Qualla was leader of the expedition was strengthened.

While plans for the march through Kikuyu country were being made, the travellers arranged for the purchase of further food supplies, and a big market was organised in a clearing:

> Here they found such an immense number of native men—most of them, it is true, laden with food—that our people dared not leave the shelter of the forest, and some of them, including Kijanja, even ran away. Qualla, however, remained calm, and made his way through the crowd, which appeared greatly excited, but when the numbers were increased by fresh swarms of gesticulating natives, he too began to feel alarmed. The young warriors, however, soon restored order, drawing their long knives or swords, and laying about them vigorously, with the flat sides only, but some blood was drawn. . . . One native snatched a bundle of beads out of Qualla's hand, another stole the turban from Maktubu's head, but (p.61) the warriors themselves caught and flogged the thieves, compelling them to restore the property taken (p.292).

Here we have an interesting statement which confirms the evidence of the Kikuyu people that long before the Europeans took over the Government of the country they had a well organised police system. A section of the warrior organisation was known as the *njama*, and they were the tribal police responsible for seeing that laws were obeyed and thieving punished. Von Höhnel gives us a striking picture, and one of the only ones we have from outside sources, of this tribal police force performing its duties prior to European control of Government. Further details of the work of the *njama* will be found in the chapter on Law and Justice (Chapter 23).

When all their preparations were ready, the party actually started their march into Kikuyu country, and it was the first time that a European had ever really entered South Kikuyu. Von Höhnel continues:

> On September 7 all was ready for a start, and an old Kikuyu, named Kassa, with a whole body of warriors, promised to guide us to our next camping-place. . . The path led us over a hilly district in a northerly direction,

> chiefly through grass-grown clearings surrounded by thick bush. About half way we met Kassa with three warriors, who, first spitting vigorously on their right hands, held them out to Count Teleki, greeting him heartily; then they hurried on to Qualla, whom they had evidently quite taken into their hearts, to shake his hand also. . . . We crossed the brook bordered by luxuriant vegetation, at which the first market was held; climbed the steep, but not lofty, hill on the other side, and camped in a wood on the ridge. The vanguard set to work at once with axes, and by the time I arrived with the rear-guard part of the palisade was already up.
>
> The natives who had escorted us thus far now disappeared, but soon returned to invite us to a shauri of welcome. Accompanied by Kijanja and three Somal as a bodyguard, we followed our leader to a clearing in the wood some 400 paces from the camp, where six natives were already waiting for us. (p.295)

Here follows an account of the speech-making by the elders of either side:

> This reception had exceeded our wildest hopes, and we failed not to express the favourable impression made on us by sending plenty of presents.
>
> The camp was soon crowded with men, women, and children bringing food and tobacco for sale, the food included sugar cane, maize, beans, cassava, millet and elusine, and on every side resounded the cry of *'Moratta, moratta, kutire kimandaja . . .*' (p.297)

p.62

Here again we find cassava mentioned as one of the foods sold, but there is every reason to believe that it was not cassava but the *mũita* variety of sweet potato. The Kikuyu words quoted above are really "*Mũrata, mũrata, gũtirĩ kĩmandaya*" (Friend, there is no hostility between us). He continues:

> The prices asked were very low, and we bought a day's rations for 350 people for 210 strings of beads. . . .
>
> This frontier camp was at a height of about 6,240 feet, in the very middle of a wood, and, as the sky was overclouded, it was quite cold. . . . But, chilly as it was, the natives arrived before daybreak the next morning with all manner of things for sale, waking us with their '*Moratta, moratta'*, etc. (p.297)

Von Höhnel regarded this, the first camp from Ngongo Bagas, as the frontier camp, but it is quite clear that it was deep in Kikuyu country—not in the highly cultivated area, of course, but in the forest fringe with villages in it which formed the Kikuyu line of fortifications. There were many Kikuyu here, and they arrived again before dawn the next morning, in spite of the cold, so that one of their villages must have been very close indeed to the camp, which was itself only 400 paces from a clearing in the forest.

The expedition spent the whole of September 8th in this camp, and while here made contact with "a certain Utahaj Uajaki", who, "told the camp that he was the *Samaki* of this district". This was none other than Waiyaki, who was at that time the head of the Kikuyu army in the whole of that area, and who in the years that followed had much to do with the Europeans before he was eventually exiled as a result of an incident which we shall discuss presently. On September 9th the party started off again:

> On September 9 we were off again, full of anxious expectations as to what would befall us by the way. Half an hour's march through a dense wood brought us to a ravine. . . . The banks were so steep and slippery that a zig-zag track had to be cut before the men could get down to the water, the crossing of which took more than an hour. . . .
>
> Another ten minutes' march brought us to a new-made clearing, round about which natives were attacking the primaeval forest with fire and axe, many charred and still glowing trunks lying strewn about in wild disorder on the smoking ground. Here Utahaj Uajaki and a large number of natives were waiting to lead us further . . . through the narrow belt of primaeval forest which forms a natural frontier enclosing the whole of Kikuyuland, and we found ourselves on its inner edge, looking down upon a charming landscape, with nothing to recall the dense woods with which it had once been covered but here and there a (p.63) group of trees or a few stumps some three feet high. From the picturesque little groves still left rose columns of smoke, betraying the presence of native settlements, whilst all around them as far as the eye could reach stretched well-cultivated, undulating pasture-

> lands, which was a revelation to us, explaining the ease with which the Wakikuyu can supply the needs of the largest caravans.
>
> The path now led through fields, and many natives, some old aquaintances, others strangers, came out to meet us, all spitting on their hands before they offered them to us (p.301).

This picture of the vast extent of the Kikuyu cultivation inside the forest fringe is repeated again and again in the accounts of early travellers. They did not, however, seem to have realised the extent to which the forest fringe was also inhabited by large numbers of people living in fortified villages that were well hidden, and with cultivated areas that were concealed from the main travellers' pathways (*njĩra cia agendi*). These "travellers ways" were the routes along which all travellers passed to get to the interior, where the routes spread out into a veritable network of paths. Von Höhnel continues:

> The fame of Qualla and Kijanja had already spread far and near, for everyone who approached the caravan called out their names and seemed delighted when they caught sight of them. Crowds of warriors now escorted us, so that our march assumed the appearance of a triumphal procession.
>
> We now went down by a gentle slope to a narrow, shallow brook flowing through a ravine on the borders of a little wood, in which a number of huts were hidden. Here a crowd of some three or four thousand natives awaited us, but after the friendly reception already given us their numbers did not alarm us. But soon we had cause to change our minds, and when I came up with the rear-guard Count Teleki told me that his party had been surrounded by hundreds of warriors, who barred his way, ordering him to stop, and were only with difficulty persuaded by a few of their headmen to stand back. This change of attitude was as unsuspected as it was unwelcome, but we kept calm, though we watched carefully every indication of how things were likely to go. We soon saw that the old men were the most persistent in their hostile cries and efforts to make us turn back. It was a good opportunity for showing our *sangfroid*. One fellow shook his fist in the Count's face several times, whilst another, who was quite tipsy, made at him with his drawn sword. The aggressors were always driven back by Utahaj, but Count Teleki was so jostled about that he presently cocked his weapon. Kassa seemed to guess what this portended, and tried to disarm the tipsy man, but he was not overpowered until Terrere, holding up his shield to protect himself, chased him down. (p.302)

p.64

In this passage we again see how mistakes made by the travellers nearly led to bloodshed. They had made friends with Waiyaki and his fellow army leaders, but they had failed to take adequate steps to get in touch with the elders, and, resenting this, the elders were insistent that they should not be allowed to proceed.

The warriors, and especially their leaders, Waiyaki and Terere, obviously did all that they could, but they had a difficult task. "Kassa" is von Höhnel's version of Gathu wa Warũirũ mentioned by Kabetũ in Chapter 1. The narrative describes further similar incidents and then continues:

> All this gave us plenty of food for reflection, but the die was cast once and for all, and we pressed on to the top of a low, flat hill in a little valley, where Utahaj told us we could camp. North and south of our hill flowed little streams, and on the banks of one of them was a group of remarkable looking trees, the only natural vegetation in the valley. ... Of course, we could not make a fence with so few materials at hand, and there was no fuel to be had but a little brought us for sale by women and children. We stacked the bales under the trees and allowed our men to camp about them. The natives, many of whom had followed us, watching our proceedings from the neighbouring heights, and were kept from intruding on us by Utahaj and his warriors, who drove them back with clubs every now and then. Our situation was anything but pleasant, as our men could not even fetch water without the escort of our friends.
>
> When we had got things a little in order the natives were allowed to enter the camp. They soon flocked in in considerable numbers, some only out of curiosity, others bringing food for sale . . .

> Our native friends did all they could to restore calm and to inspire their people with confidence in us. We too did our best by constant shouts of 'Kutire kimandaja', and our visitors would creep cautiously back only to flee again at the slightest alarm. . . .
>
> So passed the day in anxiety and excitement, but with the twilight the natives dispersed and in the evening Jumbe Kimemeta, Utahaj Uajaki, and Terrere came to Count Teleki's tent to hold a shauri with us. Utahaj was in a very serious mood, and feared that there would certainly be bloodshed if we did not give up our purpose of going through Kikuyu-land. He seemed really interested in our fate, and begged us in any case to go to his village the next morning, where he could ensure our safety, and give us the necessary material for a good fence for our camp. (p.303)

Although Waiyaki still ranked as a warrior at that time (1887), and was the chief of the warrior armies of the district, he already had a very big village (*itũũra*) under his care because his father had recently were died and he, as the eldest son, had taken over the control of his father's village, which was a fortified one, although it was not right on the Kikuyu boundary.

p.65
After describing the slow journey from the previous camp, the story continues:

> We camped at mid-day on a ridge near Utahaj's village, which, as usual in this country, is in a wood. Our ridge, which was some 115 feet high, sloped abruptly down to a brook with an equally lofty hill on the other side. (p.309)
>
> Our camp was at a height of 6,184 feet, and the weather was very dull and cloudy, (p.312)

This camp near Waiyaki's village was approximately on the site chosen later for the building of Fort Smith, and it was about half a mile from Waiyaki's village. There the caravan halted for a whole day and started off again on September the 12th accompanied by Waiyaki's. On the next day's journey we have the following notes:

> On September 12 we started again accompanied by Utahaj Uajaki, the path leading, as before, over many ridges and streams, the whole district being covered with fairly steep hills, extending north-west and south-east with a south-easterly trend. In the ravines and valleys flow insignificant streams, and the country is almost bare of trees, but very well cultivated, . . . The native tracks lead straight over the hills without any detours to break the steepness of the ascent, so that it was hard work, especially for the donkeys, and we were often delayed for some hours in crossing some brook. In fact, it is difficult to give any idea of the arduousness of the march on this day. ... In single file and close together we struggled on for from five to seven hours, only to accomplish a very few miles, and all the time we were harassed by hundreds of natives. . . .
>
> We camped safely this time, however, but had to abandon all hope that we should achieve our journey without difficulty, . . .
>
> The next day's march took us over the highest ridge in Kikuyu-land, and we camped at a height of 6,800 feet, the maximum reached by us so far. The flat summit of the ridge was now completely overgrown with a species of fern from 6½ to 8 feet high, forming whole thickets, (p.315)

This camp on September 13th was somewhere in the region of the present St Cuthbert's Church on Limuru D route, which at the time of the original manuscript (1939), was near the upper end of W. E. D. Knight's farm. The party had been led along one of the well established public footpaths or travellers' ways, and the positions of the camps of the famous Teleki, the first white man to enter South Kikuyu country, were well known to all the older Kikuyu people of that area when this manuscript was written. Von Höhnel continues:

> On September 14 we resumed our march amid scenery very much the same as that just passed through, except that there was less cultivation, (p.66) with more grass, bush, and ferns. The country was, however, still well populated, and we passed several little settlements, . . .

The number of natives who attended our march increased to thousands as we proceeded, the women and children dashing off in terror at the slightest incident, whilst the warriors pressed more closely upon the caravan. The greatest caution was needed, as we were in special danger when we had to divide our forces in two for crossing a stream; an attack would have been most unfortunate for us, and we were so hemmed in that the natives could have despatched us with clubs alone. However after a long hour of suspense we got over unmolested. On the ridge of the next hill our guide suddenly turned aside from the direct path, and led us towards a brook on the other side of which we were to camp. It was now one o'clock, and, as usual, the delays were endless. For a long time the people of the caravan waited, huddled closely together, on the edge of the perpendicular side of the brook, we in the rear-guard quite unable to see what was going on in front. Suddenly we heard a shot, then another, and another, till a perfect volley was rattling from the direction of the vanguard. We looked behind us, noted that we were well protected in the rear, and that very few natives had followed us. All the danger then was in front, and presently we saw the natives drawing back, and we were able to bear our share of the struggle. Count Teleki soon routed the enemy completely, and his assailants fled before him like wind in every direction. He then gave orders for the camp to be pitched then and there . . .

. . . An agreement was quickly come to, and even before the customary gifts were exchanged the natives flocked into camp with food for sale, so that anyone who looked on us then would have found it difficult to believe that a few hours previously we had been in deadly strife with our visitors, (p.318)

Plate 7. Paramount Chief Kĩnyanjui and one of his wives. (Note the cloak of hyrax skin)

This camp was at a place called Iriũko rĩa Gatheca. Gatheca was the grandfather of the late Chief Koinange, and Koinange was then a small boy of about ten years old. He remembered the incident quite well when I spoke with him about it. His grandfather and some of the other local elders made peace with the strangers by taking a solemn oath (*kũnyua muuma*). This was the first time that Teleki's party made use of the Kikuyu ceremony of friendship instead of the Arab one, which was not really binding as far as the Kikuyu were concerned. At this spot Teleki's party stayed until September 16th:

During the next day's march (16th) we saw no gesticulating natives, only a few silent groups squatting by the wayside, some of them with green boughs in their hands. . . .

Our slow progress was dreadfully depressing; one more or more of our donkeys succumbed each day, and at this rate we feared we should lose them all before we got to the frontier … it seemed very probable that (p.67) the hills to the east were not so steep, and that we might find paths going north in that direction. With his consent (our guide's) we now deviated from the course pursued thus far, striking along the ridge eastward, arriving at three o'clock at a good-sized brook.

We pitched our camp close to the water in a narrow ravine shut in on three sides by pretty steep hills. The natives we had passed on our way here and those who visited us now seemed to be in a state of nervous dread. They were eager to meet our wishes, and were satisfied with our gifts. As there was plenty of food to be had, the Count decided to rest a day. (p.322)

On the 19th the expedition started off again and had an uneventful day, in spite of having been told that an attack was planned:

> We camped at three o'clock in a little, almost completely shut-in valley, without having met an enemy or struck a blow, but crowds of warriors were assembled on the slopes overlooking us, all evidently prepared for war. . .
>
> Though the natives looked formidable enough as they stood some 200 to 300 paces from us, they seemed to ignore our presence altogether, taking absolutely no notice of our repeated requests that their chiefs would come and confer with us. . . .
>
> The next day, September 20, owing to the direct road being impracticable, our course formed something like a capital S. As usual we had two brooks to cross, both presenting special difficulties, though they were in themselves quite insignificant, (p.327)

On this day's march trouble was again threatened but avoided, and the caravan camped in an area:

> . . . not nearly so densely populated, and round about our next camp there were only yam and banana plantations, no cereals.
>
> On September 21 we bore first eastward, then south-eastward; the hills were broader here and the valleys wider. Numbers of natives followed us, but there were a good many women and children amongst them, which did much to reassure us. About mid-day we came to a good-sized brook, where we had to unload the donkeys, and here, as usual, difficulties arose. The Count was well on the alert, as his guide had said a little before we came to the water that he did not feel well and would go home. From our position we could see a tussle going on between the natives and the first men to cross, but Count Teleki's appearance was enough here, as so often before, to settle the dispute, inspiring more awe than all the muzzles of the loaded guns. (p.328)

The inhabitants of this part of the country had never seen a white man before, and they were struck, not only by his white face, but by the smoke which he puffed from his mouth and large pipe. It was this, (p.68) more than anything else, that again and again saved the party, according to Kikuyu accounts of the journey.

> We crossed the brook uninjured, and were waiting in the shade of a few trees on the further brink for some of the donkeys to be saddled and loaded, our line of men standing with a perfect wall of natives, numbering from 800 to 1000, close behind them, whilst on the other side of the water were about an equal number. An unusual silence prevailed, and it seemed as if the Wakikuyu were waiting for a signal. That signal came. Silently half a dozen arrows whizzed through the air and fell amongst us. Neither the Count nor I saw them coming, and the first note of alarm was the cry of a man at whose feet one of them fell. In a moment every other sound was drowned in the noise of the guns fired simultaneously by all our men. (p.329)

Here follows an account of the battle in which a great number of Kikuyu were killed and injured:

> After the bloody struggle by the brook we resumed our march, keeping a more vigilant look-out than ever. We soon noticed fresh crowds of natives at different points, but we pressed on in an east-south-easterly; direction, over a dreary, uncultivated district till we reached a commanding position on the top of a ridge. Thousands of natives soon assembled near by, and Count Teleki went off with a party of men to disperse them; they did not, however, retire till they found that they were not safe from bullets even at a distance of a 1,000 paces. (p.330)

So ended the journey through South Kikuyu. Next day they crossed the Chania River and entered Central Kikuyu, and with the rest of' their journey we are not concerned.

All the Kikuyu accounts of this journey agree that the various fights were caused by individuals or groups of Kikuyu warriors who could not resist the temptation to steal goods from the caravan, or who wanted to take the opportunity to blood their spears. The army leaders and the elders were always against the idea of fighting this first European party; they greatly feared these "white skinned people with fire in their mouths", of whom the seers and diviners had already told them.

The account given by Kabetũ in Chapter 1 does not quite coincide with the facts recorded by von Höhnel, but Kabetũ was a resident of the extreme border, and after a few days the border people

got only hearsay news of the European party. By collecting information, however, from elderly people all along the route, an account was obtained, and it coincided, in all essentials, with von Höhnel's account.

In 1888, Teleki's expedition, having been up to Lakes Rudolf and Stephanie, came south to Lake Naivasha, and then marched along (p.69) the edge of the Escarpment in the Kedong Valley as far as the point where the caravan route climbs the Escarpment and goes towards Kikuyu country. A few extracts from the second volume of von Höhnel's book are worth quoting, as they throw light upon certain matters which we can otherwise check only from the information of such elderly people as still remembered them in 1939.

> We now turned towards the steep and rugged slopes of the Leikipia plateau, just then draped with heavy masses of rain-clouds, and halted for the night by the Guaso Kedong, at the base of the mountain. On our way we had met a party of Masai women from Seringeti, a district ten days' march from the Natron lake, who were going to Kikuyu-land to exchange their tobacco for makate or natron. (Vol. 2, p.296)

The map that he published shows that by "Leikipia plateau" von Höhnel meant the Kikuyu Escarpment near Kijabe, as they camped the same day by the Kedong River. The statement that they met a party of Maasai women from the Serengetti is particularly interesting, for the Kikuyu claim that their women used to go on trading expeditions well beyond Narok to trade with the Maasai, and that the Maasai came "from very long distances" to trade with them. Here is confirmation from a disinterested observer of the importance of the Kikuyu-Maasai trade. It seems likely, however, that the sentence should read, "to trade their natron (soda) for tobacco". There was soda (*magata*) in various parts of Maasai country and none in Kikuyu country, whereas the Maasai got all their tobacco from the Kikuyu. They did not grow it themselves.

The caravan, having ascended the escarpment, marched to the Kikuyu frontier to a place which can be identified with the Ũndirĩ Swamp just beyond the present position of Kikuyu Railway Station. Of the swamp von Höhnel wrote:

> Here we met the first Wakikuyu, and heard once more, after a year's absence, the familiar shouts of *Kutire kimandaja!* and *Moratta* which now, instead of rousing anxiety and dismay, only suggested bananas, sweet potatoes, sugar-cane, maize, millet, and other good things. . . .
>
> The swamp, which is at a height of 6,810 feet, is situated in the middle of a wood and is the source of many streams. As soon as we arrived a few natives appeared, but sweet potatoes were all they had to offer us, famine prevailing here as elsewhere. (Vol. 2, p.297)

The Kikuyu have long claimed that by the time of the coming of the Europeans their borders reached beyond the Ũndirĩ Swamp, and that there were several large fortified villages in the woods there. Here in von Höhnel's account of 1888 we have confirmation of this, for no (p.70) sooner had they arrived at the Swamp than Kikuyu women appeared with food to sell. The famine mentioned was not a severe one and affected only a small part of the country. The Kikuyu had plenty of food for themselves at this time, but not much to spare for sale, since the previous rains had failed.

After camping for two days at Ũndirĩ Swamp, the caravan marched into the more densely populated part of Kikuyu country and camped not far from Waiyaki's village. After paying him a visit they marched south, out of Kikuyu country and into Maasai country once more.

The next European to enter Kikuyu territory was Jackson, who arrived at the south-east corner of Kikuyu in 1889, and marched through on his way to Uganda. Certain extracts from his book (1930), are worth recording, as they throw some light on the conditions in Kikuyu at that time.

> Our camp, just outside Kikuyu forest, was on a grassy slope on the north bank of the stream, bordering the once celebrated 'Homestead', and later on 'Sandbach Park', the property of Mrs Sandbach Baker, so well known as the original pioneer of dairy farming, (p.169)

This passage does not mean, as it might be taken to mean, that Sandbach Baker already had her "dairy farm" on this spot, but rather that the site of the camp was on the north bank of the stream which, in later years was to become the border of Sandbach Farm. The site of this camp has been identified by a Government Commission as the area now occupied by the Muthaiga Country Club and Golf Course. This identification was confirmed by Kikuyu elders who were young men living in that area at the time.

Jackson says the camp was "just outside the Kikuyu forest on a grassy slope", and he continues:

> At the camp we spent a whole day, and although the natives were quite friendly and brought in plenty of food, they were obviously nervous on account of the hammering the people further to the north-east had received at the hands of Teleki. In order to allay their suspicions, and before exchanging treaties with Kanini, the local chief, and presenting him with a Company's flag, we submitted, at his request, to the ceremony of making blood-brotherhood with him and two of his councillors, (p.170)

The Kanini of Jackson's account cannot be identified with certainty, but this was probably another name for Gĩthirĩ, an elder with a big fortified village about half a mile from the site of Jackson's camp. He was not a chief, in the European sense of the word, but a *mũthamaki wa kĩama* (leader of the local council of elders). Jackson's account continues:

> p.71
> During the next six days when passing through the densely populated and highly cultivated areas to the inner edge of the forest belt between Mianzini (the place of the bamboos) and the Kinangop Plateau, the people were most friendly. During the last two days we crossed several ravines where the donkeys gave much trouble. At one or two they had to be off-loaded, and even the porters had great difficulty in negotiating the wet greasy track . . . but the natives readily assisted us in carrying the loads across. . . .
>
> In lieu of *posho*, the men received strings of beads, and were able to vary their rations, and select what they liked best from amongst the following: *mahindi* (maize), *mtama* (millet), *wimbi* (small grain like turnip seed), and other cereals, *biasi* (sweet potato), *bazi* (peas), *kundi* (bean), and *limbi* (the tuberous root of a large leafed plant, the leaves, like an arum lily, being a good substitute for spinach). Sugar-cane and bananas were also abundant.
>
> But what pleased me more than the above was that there were here and there immense brakes of bracken, in places 6 to 8 feet high, white dover in the little grassy openings, forget-me-nots, and cow parsley, or something very like it to the non-botanical eye. (p.170)

This account of Jackson's journey from the forest fringe near Nairobi, across to the forest fringe in the Limuru district, tells us that the whole area was thickly populated and well cultivated, and that the natives were very friendly.

The journey across took six days of marching, without interference or trouble. Then, after entering the forest again in the north-west, it took four days of crawling to reach Mianzini. Here are his records:

> Our last camp in the inhabited areas was on the edge of a deeply and thickly wooded ravine, and though for the last three days it had been wet, foggy, and miserably cold, the sun burst out for a short time, and revealed the most beautiful picture of forest scenery I had ever seen up till then. . . .
>
> Next morning in drizzling rain and fog—really a Scotch mist—we entered the forest, and for the next four days we crawled along until we reached Mianzini, where we camped in an open place surrounded by bamboos, (p.172)

The Kikuyu account of Jackson's journey describes him as coming up from his first camp along the ridges until he came to the region where Fort Smith was later built. From there he went to a place called Ihiga rĩa Nyamũ, which is close to, and a little south of, the present Limuru Railway

Station. This rock was subsequently cut through by the railway. From there he proceeded to a place beyond and above the Manguuũ Swamp, near Limuru Railway Station, and then entered the forest and headed for Mianzini. It is thus clear that in (p.72) 1889 the Kikuyu cultivation and habitations were beyond Limuru Station. Gedge, who accompanied Jackson, made a map of this journey which was published in the Royal Geographic Society's Journal and confirms this.

Jackson also gives us a useful guide to the position of Mianzini. He says it took two days to reach Naivasha from there, and the map shows the position as well north of Kijabe.

After Jackson, the next European to come into South Kikuyu was Lugard. His account (1893) refers to early 1890, a few months after Jackson had passed through.

Lugard, like Teleki, entered from the region of Ngongo Bagas, and came with instructions to build a fort and an administrative centre as a halting place for caravans going to Uganda. He had been instructed to build his fort at Ngongo Bagas. Since this was in Maasai country he decided against it, marched into Kikuyu country, and camped on the site where Teleki had camped earlier, and where a few years later Fort Smith was built. This site was near Waiyaki's village, and Lugard made friends with him (he called him Eiyeki). Lugard wrote:

> This spot is the one on which Fort Smith was afterwards built by Captain Smith. *Hongo* (pass money) was again demanded; but I declined to pay it, saying that I intended to build a station here, and if they would give me ground for a site, I would then give a present in return.
>
> I did not myself approve of this place as a site for the station, because it was situated in the very heart of the villages and fields of the Wa-Kikuyu. This I knew would lead to constant trouble. Caravans from the coast, halting at the station, would inevitably pilfer from the crops, or cause trouble with the women. Moreover, the place was somewhat cramped, and firewood not obtainable for a considerable distance. I spent some time in examining the surrounding country towards the forest, under the guidance of the local chief Eiyeki and his brothers, and eventually selected a charming site at a little distance from the cultivation and villages. A clear mountain stream flowed at the foot of the slope; beyond was the dense forest, in rear was another stream. Timber and fuel were of course in abundance. The name of the place was Dagoreti. (p.325)

This site chosen by Lugard was, as he says, the edge of the Kikuyu occupation, and although he did not know it, there were some fortified villages in the forest to the south-west. The site referred to is not that which is called Dagoretti today, but a little removed from it and still known as "Old Dagoretti". It was, according to Lugard, five miles from Ngongo Bagas, and this was not a mere guess, but the result of careful survey.

p.73

Lugard found Waiyaki friendly and helpful, as had Teleki. Of him he wrote:

> In fact, I took a great fancy to the local chief Eiyeki, and especially to his brother Miroo (known to the Kikuyu as Mĩrũrũ). They were extremely intelligent, good-mannered, and *most* friendly. I lay some emphasis on this, because I shall later have to allude to the extraordinary events which subsequently happened in Kikuyu.
>
> These people are at constant war with the Masai, who periodically raid the country in strong war-parties. The Wa-Kikuyu, however, hold their own, unless surprised or attacked in overpowering force, (p.327)

Lugard gives an account of Kikuyu agriculture as he found it in 1890:

> The cultivation in Kikuyu is prodigiously extensive; indeed, the whole country may be said to be under tillage. . . . We bought some 20,000 lb. of grain and beans (mostly the latter) in a few days, before starting on the onward march, and at excessively cheap rates, and this in spite of the fact that a flight of locusts had recently devastated the country, that Mr Jackson's caravan had bought up large quantities, and that this was not the best time of year for food purchase. They have, moreover, a very well-contrived system of irrigation. The common agricultural implement appears to be a long-pointed pole. (p.328)

This passage not only confirms the statements of Thomson, von Höhnel, and Jackson as to the intense cultivation of this area, but it proves that the Kikuyu are not making false claims when they say that they had an irrigation system before the white man taught them his methods of agriculture. The reference to the digging stick (*mũnyago*), which was the Kikuyu substitute for a hoe, is also interesting and confirms the Kikuyu's claim that it was an efficient tool. The reference to locusts helps us to fix the date of the *Ngigi* age-group as 1890, since it was initiated in the year of the locust invasion. Lugard continues:

> I made treaties with Eiyeki and several other chiefs, who came from considerable distances to perform the ceremony of blood-brotherhood. …Such are the treaties concluded by myself, and sent to England, which have been approved and registered at the Foreign Office, and more binding treaties could not have been executed in savage Africa. (p.329)

Lugard left his fort at Dagoretti in charge of Wilson and went on to Uganda. Unfortunately, owing to a series of misunderstandings and some serious mismanagement by men who succeeded Wilson, the reign of friendship with the Kikuyu was turned into bitter hatred and enmity.

> p.74
> . . . I very greatly deplore the mismanagement which has practically closed a country which bade fair to be the most promising for commercial development between the coast and the lake, and has converted the fair promise of friendship and peace into hostility and bloodshed, so that the people have become a treacherous and embittered enemy, who now massacre any detached men they can catch, in spite of the strong fort garrisoned by 150 rifles, where formerly Wilson, with no fort at all, was safe with 30 ill-armed men. (p.336)

This was written some years later, after a series of events which ended in much bloodshed had spoiled relations between the foreigners and the Kikuyu.

Lugard gives a brief summary of the position as he found it a bare two years after he had made peace treaties with Waiyaki. He was on his way back to the coast from Uganda, and on August 7th, 1892, he arrived again in Kikuyu country and found that Dagoretti had been abandoned and a new fort built on the site which he had rejected. He wrote of the position at that time:

> Captain Nelson was shortly expected to take command of 'Fort Smith', as the new stockade was called, but he had been deserted by his men, and was now lying sick at the Kibwezi. Meanwhile Mr. Purkiss was commandant. The fort, which was on the site I had abandoned in favour of Dagoreti, was well constructed, and more pretentious than my hasty stockades had been. . . .
>
> But there was bad news here. It will be remembered that I had left Wilson in command at Dagoreti. He had succeeded admirably with the people, and Kikuyu promised to be the most progressive station between the coast and the lake. The natives were very friendly, and even enlisted as porters to go to the coast. But these good relations received a disastrous check. Owing largely, I believe, to the want of discipline in the passing caravans, whose men robbed the crops and otherwise made themselves troublesome, the people became estranged, and presently murdered several porters. Wilson had but a handful of men, and his ammunition was expended. His application for more was unheeded. On the advice of Mr. Gedge, who was on his way back from Uganda (about April 1891), Wilson evacuated the fort, which was thereupon burnt down by the Wakikuyu, who looted the stores it contained, including the steel boat destined for Uganda. Wilson collected thirty volunteers at the neighbouring station, Machakos, and returned to Kikuyu. The Masai, with whom he had made great friends, offered their assistance, but he declined it. They would not be denied, however, and remained close by in case he should meet with reverse. With his insignificant force, however, he taught the Wakikuyu a lesson.
>
> He had compelled the payment of fifty goats daily, and the free work of 300 men to rebuild the fort they had destroyed. He had enlisted 200 (p.75) from among the Wakikuyu. The Masai had been his staunch friends and he had stipulated that they should have free access to Kikuyu trade. This treaty was kept inviolate for seven months. The men he left were tended, and some loads of beads stored with Eiyeki were duly delivered up safely three months later. Meanwhile. . . Wilson had been dismissed through false reports. Kikuyu was again abandoned, until Captain Smith was ordered to reoccupy it. He built a very strong stockade on the site of my

> first camp, and soon after left the country in charge of a young agent. Continual disaster followed. The Masai, who had made such friends with Wilson, and stood by him so loyally, were fired upon, apparently without any attempt at inquiry or negotiation, and have since retaliated by murdering mail-men. The Wakikuyu became hopelessly disaffected, and I now hear that from thirty to forty of the Company's *employees* have been murdered by them. (Vol. 2, p.535)

The reason for this is to be found both in Kikuyu accounts and in the count of Macdonald, which will be quoted later. It seems that Purkiss, the young agent who was left in charge, was in the habit of sending parties into distant parts of Kikuyu country under the charge of an old Arab called Maktubu who had been on Teleki's expedition. The Kikuyu allege that this Arab treated them unfairly on these expeditions into the interior, and that their women were abused and the food acquired from them often not paid for. Eventually, in desperation and anger, the Kikuyu killed Maktubu and his party, and this led to terrible retaliation by Purkiss and Macdonald:

> We arrived to hear that the head native and seven porters had recently been assassinated, and Mr Purkiss was waiting for advice and reinforcements before taking any action in the matter! Such a state of things seemed to me most deplorable. Vacillation and indecision cause in the end a vastly greater amount of bloodshed than the strong hand and the personality which commands obedience. The Wakikuyu now thought they could murder our men with impunity; both they and the Masai were hostile! Africa needs the right men—men of decision and of character and individuality. Where such men are in charge, you will rarely hear of bloodshed, of murders, and 'reprisals', (p.537)

It is quite evident that Lugard considered Purkiss chiefly responsible for the change in the position of the Kikuyu, and the Kikuyu certainly despised him. The Kikuyu name for Purkiss was *Mbaya*, or the *Bad Man*, and he caused more bloodshed in Kikuyu than any other man.

The story of the way in which the reprisals against the Kikuyu were planned and carried out by Purkiss, with Macdonald to assist him, must be given in Macdonald's words. But before we come to that we must briefly consider extracts from Major Macdonald's book (1897), (p.76) which have a general bearing upon the Kikuyu life and organization in 1892 when he first passed through:

> Thanks to the boma (at Ngongo Bagas), we passed a quiet night on this occasion, and next day entered Kikuyu, crossed the narrow forest belt, with its grand trees and open glades, and entered what appeared one great expanse of potato-fields. The narrow tapering spurs seemed covered with potatoes far in excess of the requirements of the natives. Dotted about amongst the cultivation stood patches of dense forest, and in the heart of each patch nestled a native village. At this time the natives were friendly, and crowds turned out to watch us pass, and brought food and delicacies for sale. But we did not stop to trade; we soon reached Fort Smith, where we were hospitably received by the founder, Major Eric Smith, and his indefatigable assistant Mr. Purkiss...
>
> We reached Fort Smith on March 24th, and three days later marched for Naivasha ... (p.56)
>
> As agriculturists the Wakikuyu are very enterprising, as is shown by the miles of potato plantations, which are far in excess of their own requirements. New clearings are daily being made with fire and axe in the surrounding forests. They have also a rude idea of irrigation, and lead little water-channels from the valleys on to the top of the spurs. It must not be supposed that sweet-potato and sugar-cane are the only produce of the country, for maize, various kinds of millet, beans, yams, bananas, tobacco, and oil-seeds, are also largely grown; bees, too, are cultivated, . . .
>
> A Wakikuyu village, in the southern districts at all events, is almost invariably situated in a clump of forest, and every entrance is artificially strengthened by gates and pitfalls, while sharpened stakes and spikes are freely used in the surrounding grass. Inside are grouped the wooden huts of the natives. . . . Cattle, goats, and sheep are abundant, and during peace are kept in the village; but let the war-cry once be raised, and all the live-stock is driven, by paths known only to the inhabitants, far into the neighbouring forest, there to remain until the invader is expelled or peace has been secured, (p.109)

This account by Macdonald is of interest as it gives us confirmation of the views expressed by others, about the extraordinary extent of the Kikuyu cultivation, "far in excess of their needs". It

also confirms Lugard's statement about irrigation, and gives us the first account by a European of Kikuyu methods of fortification. It is useful to find that Macdonald's account of the way village entrances were protected tallies exactly with that given me by old Kikuyu men. It also gives us added confidence in the accuracy of other statements about matters of which we have no written record.

p.77
We must next proceed to Macdonald's account of the events which led to the building of Fort Smith in place of Dagoretti, the reasons why Purkiss came to be left in charge, and how he fared:

> . . . in 1891 (after Dagoretti had been abandoned by Wilson) Captain Smith, of the 1st Life Guards, assisted by a young probationer named Purkiss, set out for Kikuyu with a strong caravan, completely equipped in every respect. Smith did not halt on the outskirts of the cultivation, but boldly marched to Wyaki's village, and before that astonished potentate quite knew what was happening, Smith's camp was pitched in the centre of his village, (p.113 *et seq*).

This statement, which is incidentally confirmed by the story of Kabetũ in Chapter 1 when he says, "They went straight into his own homestead and put up their tents right inside it", is illuminating, for it confirms the Kikuyu statements as to the immense area enclosed by one of their fortified villages. Smith had a large number of soldiers and porters with him and they were, for a time, all camped inside the area of Waiyaki's village, with Smith's and Purkiss's tents actually in Waiyaki's own homestead. The story continues:

> Further negotiations were easy, and he acquired an excellent piece of ground a short distance from the village. He decided to build the new fort in the flat-topped spur, and as the country round was covered with hundreds of acres of sweet potatoes, with a small stream flowing in an open valley within easy reach, the new station could not be starved into surrender. Wood was a difficulty, but, as Smith had a strong caravan, large, well-armed working parties proceeded daily to the forest to fell and bring in poles.
>
> For months Smith and Purkiss toiled incessantly, and when we reached Kikuyu in March, 1892, the fort had only been recently completed. . . .
>
> During the construction of the fort there had been no trouble, as Smith still kept his camp in Wyaki's village, and that amiable old scoundrel was of course on his good behaviour. When the fort was complete and Smith moved into it, Wyaki's friendship began to cool, and by the time we arrived he had not been to see Smith for about a month, and was invariably not at home if the Europeans called on him. Rumours of intrigues with the Waguruguru, with whom Wyaki was related by marriage, were also rife, so Smith asked us to accompany a farewell visit to the native chief.
>
> . . . Shortly afterwards Smith departed for the coast, and the railway survey continued its journey towards the lake. Purkiss, thus left alone, got on very well.

In this passage Macdonald seems to suggest that the strained relations between Smith and Waiyaki were the latter's fault. But the (p.78) Kikuyu point of view does not accord with this. According to those who were young men at the time and in close touch with Waiyaki, he became less friendly because of the attitude of the Europeans. Smith had asked for land on which to build a fort and had been given it. He then indicated that he might want more, so that the people governing the fort could grow food for themselves. Waiyaki thought this unreasonable, as, if they grew their own food, they would be less willing to purchase it from his people. He therefore objected to giving them land for cultivation, and since they insisted, a feeling of tension sprang up. The behaviour of many of the men of the garrison towards local women also caused trouble. According to the Kikuyu version of things, the root of the trouble lay with the Europeans. Certainly, from the way that Waiyaki had shown his friendship towards Teleki, Lugard, and Wilson, it seems hardly

believable that he would have made trouble with Smith and Purkiss, unless he had what he considered a serious grievance.

Macdonald then goes on to relate how matters developed until the middle of 1892, when Maktubu's party was massacred:

> He (Purkiss) made friends with a neighbouring chief, Wandenge, whose district was about twelve miles from the fort, and started a bazaar at his village. Large quantities of food were cheaply procured and stored to await passing caravans, and small parties of from twelve to twenty men could travel backwards and forwards to Wandenge's village in safety.
>
> But Smith's fears that trouble might arise from the Waguruguru were only too well founded. In the summer of 1892 this powerful section of the Wakikuyu attacked one of Purkiss' trading-parties some miles north of Wandenge's territory. Maktub, the Swahili headman, had only ten men with him, but made a gallant defence. It was, however, of no avail, and he and the greater portion of his little party were killed. This handicapped Purkiss greatly, as Maktub was his senior native officer, and, in the absence of European assistants at Fort Smith, a man of considerable importance. The Guruguru district was about fifteen miles away, and Purkiss could hardly go so far from the fort, and leave it in charge of a native subordinate, (p.115 *et seq*).

Purkiss's friendship with Wangengi (in Macdonald's version, Wandenge) was probably the principal, though indirect, cause of the trouble that arose. His village was on the Rũirũ River, and although Purkiss went there himself once or twice (once with Bishop Tucker, as we shall see), it was a tactical mistake to organise a market there and send his men to buy provisions and transport them back to the fort. The Kikuyu of that area would have been quite willing to bring food for sale to Fort Smith and thus obviate the necessity of sending (p.79) parties of Arab and Swahili porters to fetch it. Purkiss could not go every time himself, and he used to put Maktubu and men like him in charge. According to the evidence of many old men who were warriors that time, the behaviour of these armed parties of Arabs and Swahilis was provocative. They also caused trouble with the women, and it was, in the circumstances, almost inevitable that sooner or later one of the small parties would be attacked and people killed. The mistake seems certainly to have been Purkiss', or rather, to place the responsibility where it really belongs, due to an error of judgement on the part of the Company's officers. At such an important fort as Fort Smith, in the heart of a densely populated area, a young, inexperienced man like Purkiss ought not to have been left in charge. If he had to be, he should at least have been provided with one other European assistant. To give him as assistant a man like Maktubu, whom the Kikuyu instinctively disliked because he was an Arab, was asking for trouble. Also, as we have seen from Lugard's account, when Maktubu's party was killed Purkiss did not take up the matter immediately and demand that the murderers be handed over and a fine paid. By his indecision he encouraged the Kikuyu belief that he was afraid of them, a fatal mistake.

Macdonald's version of what happened continues:

> His (Purkiss') apparent inaction encouraged the hostile faction, who were kept well informed of his dispositions by our old friend Wyaki. Foraging-parties, mail-men, and all who strayed far from the fort, were harassed by the Wakikuyu, who openly talked of repeating on Fort Smith their success against Dagoretti.
>
> Such was the state of affairs when the returning survey expedition (Major Macdonald's expedition), accompanied by Captain Lugard, arrived there about the beginning of August (1892). Captain Lugard's caravan was not armed, and so Purkiss applied to me for assistance, which I felt bound to afford. Being pressed for time, Lugard took no part in the operations, but left almost at once for the coast. Purkiss was now warned by the few friendly chiefs, who had stood by him so far, that, unless he took action, a general rising against the Company's authority might be expected. He accordingly asked me to take military command of a punitive expedition against the Guruguru, and placed himself under my orders . . .

> The Guruguru expedition was secretly organised, so that not even our own natives knew anything about it till they were formed up at midnight. Two friendly chiefs had remained in the fort all night, and now came forward as guides. The small force at our disposal was divided into five companies of about thirty men each. Purkiss commanded the leading company, which was followed by that under my personal command.
>
> p.80
> Then came the baggage under Foaker, and Pringle's and Austin's companies brought up the rear. The night march was very trying, as the path was bad, and in many places wet and slippery. Numerous streams and ravines had to be negotiated, and the advance guard had to make frequent halts, to prevent the rear going astray in the darkness. Just as day was breaking, we entered the enemy's country, and had to move prepared for action. . . .
>
> About 11 a.m. we were in the heart of the enemy's country, and looked about for a favourable camping-ground. A small village in a clearing on the summit of a spur seemed just the place we wanted, and here, accordingly, we settled down, strengthening our position as much as possible against a night attack. Meanwhile, the natives kept assuring us that they did not want to fight; that they would pay the fine imposed by Mr. Purkiss, and would return the arms taken from Maktub's party, but these protestations we knew were only to gain time, while they assembled a sufficient force to attack us. About 2 p.m., having from 800 to 1,000 men in position around the village, they ceased all talk of peace, and began to sing their war-songs.

According to Macdonald's version, the Kikuyu did not really wish to pay the fine and so avoid fighting, and were only bidding for time. According to the version given by the Kikuyu warriors present at the time, the Europeans refused to believe them and went on making preparations for a fight, so the Kikuyu had no alternative but to do likewise. After a time Macdonald made the first move and marched out three of his companies in battle array. The Kikuyu military ideas included a rule that if a battle was to take place they should attack first and not wait until the enemy was ready. When, therefore, they saw Macdonald move out his men in battle array, they attacked at once, realising that the Europeans did not wish for anything but a fight:

> It was now evident that they meant mischief, and as I was not desirous of awaiting a night attack, I moved out with three companies along the spur, leaving Pringle in camp with his own and Austin's men. We had hardly reached an open space about 500 yards away, when the Waguruguru closed in on us from three sides. Their main body was to the south, across a small stream, and this charged towards us with shouts of defiance, while two smaller detachments bore down on our right flank and rear. Taking the main attack first, we poured in a few volleys, which checked their ardour, and then I turned the company right about, and led them against those of our assailants who were now approaching our rear. Their chief, who from a commanding tree-stump was directing the attack, fell dead at almost the first fire, and his followers hastily retreated. I then promptly wheeled my company to the left, and checked the advance of the Wakikuyu flank attack, which had approached within easy bowshot. . . . Having thus repulsed the onslaught, we resumed the (p.81) offensive, rapidly crossed the stream, and while one company covered the movement, the others occupied the large village in which the main body of the enemy had assembled. . . . The enemy were now fleeing on every side, and as they had been taught a sharp lesson, we contented ourselves with burning their village and returning to camp.
>
> Immediately after our return envoys arrived with presents of goats and sheep and asked for peace. We told them that we had not yet received satisfaction for the attack on Maktub, and that the dead men's rifles must be returned to us before we could listen to overtures. Next day we continued our advance, (p.117)

This last statement confirms the Kikuyu version of the story that Macdonald and his party did not want peace. Had they given the Kikuyu time, the guns would probably have been brought in, but since they had been taken as trophies by individuals who had killed Maktubu and his party, they could not be found and returned at once. The Kikuyu, however, were not given time, but at dawn the next day Macdonald and his party went on with the attack:

> Village after village was occupied and searched, and in some we found tokens, such as portions of the dead man's accoutrements, which clearly showed that the inhabitants had participated in the attack on Maktub. All this time the enemy hovered round at a distance, but did not venture near; only once, when their position was a very good one on the far side of a particularly difficult ravine, did they make a stand. . . .

> On gaining the high ground, we found ourselves on a great open clearing, surrounded by seven large villages, and, as soon as the main body came up, these were attacked. . . . In no case did the enemy make more than a shadow of resistance, and soon seven pillars of smoke rising skyward announced to the countryside that the enemy's main stronghold had shared the fate of the other hostile encampments we had already destroyed, (p.118)

Burning the peoples' homes when they had asked for peace twice and were no longer resisting was a serious blot on the prestige of the Europeans. For years the Kikuyu did not forget that their offer to make peace was rejected and their women and children rendered homeless. The expeditions went eastward to Wangengi's village, where they spent the night before returning to Fort Smith.

Here, on the evening of their return, took place one of the events which will ever live in Kikuyu history and in the Kikuyu mind as an example, from their point of view, of the unfairness of the white man.

Just after they had returned to Fort Smith, Waiyaki, who had been drinking and was definitely drunk, came to the Fort and went to Purkiss' room. Purkiss, seeing that he was drunk, tried to turn him out. (p.82) Waiyaki, in too drunken a state to realise what he was doing, drew his sword and resisted Purkiss, and after a struggle in which Purkiss got Waiyaki's sword from him and hit him over the head with it, Waiyaki was bound and imprisoned for the night. Waiyaki had always been a staunch friend of the various Europeans from Teleki's time onwards, and it is admitted by Macdonald (who was present at the time), that Waiyaki was drunk. Had this been taken into account, and had he been pardoned, he would, in all probability, have become a better friend than ever. Macdonald accounts for what happened:

> It appeared that Wyaki, who was rather drunk, went into Purkiss' room to taunt him with his failure to secure the cattle of the Guruguru. Purkiss, seeing the state he was in, ordered him out of the house, and on Wyaki becoming still more insolent, pushed him towards the door. Wyaki at once drew his sword and attacked Purkiss, who was unarmed, and could not get to the weapons he had laid aside on entering his room. An unequal struggle now commenced, and Purkiss grappled with the Kikuyu chief, in an endeavour to deprive him of his sword. The rest of the struggle we had ourselves witnessed.
>
> Wyaki was tried next day in the presence of seventeen of his brother chiefs, to whom all the evidence was translated. Of the verdict there could be no doubt, nor had Wyaki any defence to make, except that he was drunk. So we decided to take him away with us to the coast, and deport him permanently from the country, where he had proved such a treacherous enemy, and the cause of so much bloodshed. . . . Wyaki, however, never reached the coast, as he died at Kibwezi. It appeared that his skull had been slightly fractured by the sword-cut he received from Purkiss, and this caused complications, which killed him. Strange to say, poor Purkiss died at the same station a few years afterwards . . . and the graves of the two combatants lie close together, (p.120)

According to the Kikuyu version, the people were so enraged when they heard that Waiyaki was to be deported for an act not committed deliberately, but while drunk, that they planned an ambush to release him. I have spoken to several old men who were leaders of this plan and who were in the ambush. They all testify that it was Waiyaki himself who, on realising what was about to happen, cursed the warriors and ordered them not to attack.

Waiyaki had never been the "treacherous enemy" that Macdonald makes him out to have been. He had been a friend to the Europeans from the first and had done a great deal for them. His fate was due to something done when he was not fully conscious of his actions.

The considerable troubles that followed in 1893 and 1894 were in large measure due to the error of judgement by Purkiss and Macdonald (p.83) in not pardoning Waiyaki and thus strengthening his friendship with Europeans.

Shortly after this incident Nelson was sent to take charge of Fort and Purkiss was reduced to second in command. There was peace for a time, and Bishop Tucker, who arrived about then, went with Purkiss to Wangengi's to buy food and see about the chances of establishing missionary work in Kikuyu country. A long quotation from Tucker's account must be given because he describes the outbreak of smallpox which was then ravaging the Maasai, and which afterwards spread into Kikuyu country. This record enables us to fix the date of the age-group called *Mũtũng'ũ*, which was initiated in 1893, year after the outbreak. Bishop Tucker wrote:

> On the outskirts of the Kikuyu forest we came upon a scene sad and sickening in its tokens of accumulated misery. Hundreds of skeletons of Masai were lying about in all directions. Deserted kraals were dotted about here and there, and around them skins, broken calabashes and household utensils of all kinds covered the ground. Their homes had been broken up by small-pox and starvation. The cattle plague had carried off vast numbers of the flocks and herds of the Masai, and as they are not cultivators of the soil their only means of subsistence was gone—and starvation claimed its victims by the thousand. . . .
>
> Being very anxious to see what opportunities there might be for Missionary work in Kikuyu, I took advantage of Mr Purkiss going to buy food for our caravan to visit a chief named Wandengi. . . .
>
> . . . Our business of food buying was most successful . . . at 8 a.m. a few people made their appearance, and as the day rapidly improved—the numbers of those crowding into camp greatly increased. Very soon, large numbers were gathered round the buyers. . . . The next day the same thing went on. The only interruption was the war-cry raised in some distant villages, as a body of Masai warriors passed within sight. At 4 p.m. we had purchased nearly 20,000 lbs. weight of food—flour, beans, Indian corn, &c.,—quite as much as we could carry away—and the market closed, ... (p.207)

The Maasai mentioned in this passage as "passing through Kikuyu" were probably parties who had come in search of food, as many did at time. They had been stricken by smallpox, their cattle had died in thousands from rinderpest, and the survivors of the smallpox were starving. Hundreds of them came into Kikuyu territory to beg for sweet potatoes, and as the Kikuyu were then at peace with them, they were permitted to stay. Thus they brought smallpox into Kikuyu territory, and by the beginning of 1893 it was raging throughout the land.

p.84

Later in 1892 Macdonald once more was passing Fort Smith, and he again found that the Kikuyu were being troublesome. They were still angry at the way they had been treated and at Waiyaki's deportation. Fights took place in which Macdonald assisted, as did Major Eric Smith (the original founder of Fort Smith), who also happened to be passing through on his way to Uganda. After the fighting peace was suggested, but the Kikuyu were now in no mood for peace. As Macdonald wrote:

> The tribesmen still refused peace, so before sunrise next day Purkiss and Hall were despatched to surprise a hostile gathering to the eastward. So successful were they, that, after a moderate skirmish, they drove away the enemy, and returned with several hundred goats and sheep. As Wyaki's kinsmen were mixed up in the business, Smith determined to destroy his village, . . . Smith carried out the work of destruction very completely. The huts were dismantled, and the timber stacked near the fort as fuel. A broad clearing, over fifty yards wide, was also cut into the belt of forest surrounding the village, and this completely annulled the value of its really formidable gate defences. The tribesmen now submitted, and peace was again declared.
>
> But in the spring of 1893 the irrepressible Wakikuyu again commenced hostilities, ... (p.123)

Here follows another long account of further fighting and the burning down of many villages by Purkiss, who was once more in charge, as Nelson had died.

> In the summer of 1893 Purkiss was ordered to Uganda, and Hall took charge of this African Castle Perilous. He cultivated friendly relations with the Masai, and soon had a colony of several hundred of these warriors encamped near the Fort. . . . The Wakikuyu, who viewed this newly-founded colony with disfavour, were soon again in

> arms, but Hall, supported by 200 Masai Elmoran, soon gave them a lesson, and again reduced them to peace. . . .
>
> Such was the state of matters in Kikuyu when I passed through on my way to the coast in the spring of 1894. (p.126)

This passage needs amplification to explain how these Maasai came to be encamped with Hall at Fort Smith. At this time the Kaputei Maasai were at peace with the Kikuyu, and when, early in 1894, the Loita Maasai attacked the Kaputei Maasai and vanquished them, large numbers of the latter moved into Kikuyu country with their cattle, women, and children. Many hundreds of these Maasai took up residence in Kikuyu country, and some even built manyattas near the villages of the Kikuyu families with whom they were friendly. After (p.85) a time the Maasai warriors were gradually collected by Hall, who saw in them a potential army to use against the Kikuyu.

As more and more of the Maasai who had taken refuge in Kikuyu country moved their stock, women, and children to the settlement at Fort Smith, the Kikuyu, realising what was likely to happen, became annoyed and protested. Their protest went unheeded, and as a result they once more opened hostilities against the Fort, in spite of the fact that they never had a chance, as Hall had men armed with rifles to support the Maasai.

From this time onwards the number of Maasai who settled at Fort Smith increased, and in 1897 Major Austin, who had been with Macdonald in 1892, wrote as follows:

> Fort Smith was reached by us on August 28, and here again the whole expedition remained concentrated for a time. McLoughlin who on the Athi complained of feeling far from well, now showed undoubted symptoms of typhoid, and was immediately provided with accommodation inside the Fort by Lane, then in charge, during the absence of Hall the Commandant. The latter had lately proceeded to the Ravine station with a large body of Wa-Kikuyu, carrying some 1,000 loads of flour to be stored there for the use of the expedition against its arrival. . . .
>
> . . . Kikuyu (Fort Smith) had increased beyond all recognition since former days. Broad roads and rows of huts, a large bazaar, and bungalows for the European community, had sprung up, whilst both Messrs. Smith Mackenzie and Boustead Ridley and Co. had stores and agents stationed there, . . .
>
> . . . Although the Wa-Kikuyu and Masai were formerly bitter enemies and constantly at warfare with each other, thanks to the effort of the Government officials, peace had been established between these two warlike races, and large numbers of the latter had been allowed to settle down in the heart of the Kikuyu country, in the neighbourhood of Fort Smith, (p.23)

When Austin's party returned from Uganda early in 1899 he found that Hall had been having trouble with a certain section of the Kikuyu, he wrote:

> Hall had only recently returned from a punitive expedition against section of the Wa-Kikuyu, who had been giving a great deal of trouble. Some of the East African Rifles from Machakos had been despatched to assist him, and in all the natives were deprived of 400 head of cattle and 10,000 goats and sheep, (p.269).

This section of the Kikuyu lived in the neighbourhood of where Kiambu Boma now stands. A large proportion of the Kaputei Maasai (p.86) who had taken refuge from the Loita Maasai had come to this particular area, and when they moved to Fort Smith the Kikuyu had retained a proportion of their cattle and refused to let the Maasai take them. The Maasai eventually got Hall to demand their return. The Kikuyu refused, and a punitive expedition was organised. The Kikuyu paid dearly, for they not only lost the Maasai cattle that had been left, but 10,000 of their own goats and sheep as well.

This was just before the great famine became really serious in 1899. As the famine intensified, the fact that they had lost so many head of stock made their plight worse than that of those in many other parts Kikuyu, and thousands in this particular area died of starvation.

Early in 1899, when Austin was on his way back from Uganda, the famine had already started, and he wrote:

> The reports we had heard regarding the scarcity of food we found to be only too true . . . The resources of the country were not now equal to the demand, and ordinary flour had fetched as high a price as 1 rupee per pound, (p.269).

The famine was directly due to the failure of two rainy seasons, but it was made much worse than it would otherwise have been by the fact that all surplus food had been sold in the previous season to passing caravans and to the big community at Fort Smith. In addition, the people in charge of the new railway construction were demanding supplies to feed their labour gangs. When the rains failed, the Kikuyu of the south had no reserves left in their granaries, and famine spread through the land causing many of them to migrate temporarily Central Kikuyu, north of the Chania River, where food was more plentiful, the people there having been too far from the caravan routes to be able to sell their reserves.

Thus, by 1900 the population of South Kikuyu had been considerably depleted by deaths from famine, smallpox, and the guns of the Europeans, and by temporary migration.

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Introduction

We have already pointed out that the customs of the Kikuyu living south of Chania River (Kiambu) differed in many respects from those of the Central and Northern sections of the tribe (Fort Hall and Nyeri), and this is particularly true of the customs relating to land tenure. As this book deals only with the Southern section of Kikuyu country, that is, the area south of the Chania River, the facts set out this chapter must not be taken as applying in detail, or even in general, to any other areas.

Tradition places the origin of the tribe at a place called Mũkũrũwe wa Gathanga in the Fort Hall district, and it would seem that the first movements from that area were along the ridges eastwards towards the plains and westwards to the Aberdare Range. Then, as congestion increased in the Fort Hall district, movements both northwards and southwards began, and in this book we are concerned only with the latter.

It is likely that in the Fort Hall area the Kikuyu acquired their land simply by a gradual process of cutting down the forest, clearing the bush, and establishing themselves by right of first user. There is no record that the Ndorobo hunting tribe was ever in effective occupation of that part of the country, and the only previous inhabitants seem to have been a tribe called by the Kikuyu "Gumba" or *Maitho a Ciana* (children's eyes). These people, from all accounts, must have been a pygmy race, few in number, and having no organised land usage, even for hunting purposes.

South of the Chania River, however, the position was different. A few families of the Gumba were living in the forest, a fact with which even Ndorobo tradition agrees, but they were wanderers eking out a precarious existence and hiding from the real owners, the Wandorobo.

The Wandorobo were, like the Gumba, a hunting people, but they they were much more organised, and according to their own traditions, they had, even in the distant past, established definite laws and customs relating to hunting rights.

The whole of the forests and glades in the area we are concerned with were regarded by the Wandorobo as their land. This land was not held communally by them; each family had its own hunting grounds, (p.88) the boundaries of which were marked out and clearly defined. No member of any Ndorobo family could hunt, trap, or even take wild honey and put up bee hives in the hunting grounds of any other family, without being liable to fines and punishment by the elders of the tribe.

These Ndorobo "hunting estates" were of immense size and were considered the absolute property of the families who controlled them. They had been taken over originally by virtue of first occupation, and their rights were not questioned by the Kikuyu. In fact, the Kikuyu described the Wandorobo as the rulers of the bush land (*Aathi a Gĩthaka*).

When the Kikuyu started to move across the Chania River in search of agricultural land they negotiated with the Wandorobo, whom they regarded as the lawful owners, and bought forest land from them in the manner to be described in detail in this chapter.

Many Europeans, used to the doctrine of "might makes right," have repeatedly argued that the Kikuyu claim to have bought land from the Wandorobo is groundless, as it would obviously have been much easier to drive them out and take the land. Therefore we must examine the facts carefully.

Many Europeans have also argued that the Wandorobo could not have sold land to the Kikuyu, as they owned no land to sell; these transactions could, according to the white man, have only been "compensation for disturbance of hunting rights". This argument must also be examined before we can proceed to describe the methods whereby the negotiations between the Kikuyu and the Wandorobo were carried out.

The Wandorobo and their Mode of Life

The word Wandorobo has been used by Europeans in Kenya to describe the various hunting tribes that inhabited the forest zones of what was called the Kenya Highlands. There is no doubt that the name has been used to describe several distinct tribal entities which anthropologists and linguists would have no difficulty in distinguishing from each other on the grounds of law, custom, and language. For the purpose of this study we shall concern ourselves only with that part of the assemblage, called Wandorobo by the European, who inhabited the forest lands that were later bought by the Kikuyu. Their descendants were still living in 1938 on the boundary of Kikuyu country in (p.89) the Kijabe region, and northwards on to the slopes of the Aberdare Range. At that date only 200 or 300 individuals were left to represent the tribe, and most of them had a certain amount of Kikuyu blood in them. They still retained, however, many customs which were quite distinct from those of the Kikuyu, and they still spoke (among themselves) a language of their own. Most, if not all, also spoke Kikuyu, but with a marked accent.

In spite of the fact that only such a small number of Wandorobo were left in 1938, it would be erroneous to assume that they were never more numerous. There were probably several hundred families representing more than a thousand people in the not very distant past, in what is now South Kikuyu. The reason for the decrease in their numbers is due not so much to extinction as to absorption, for when the Kikuyu bought their land, many Wandorobo families gave up their hunting life and married into Kikuyu families, or gave their daughters in marriage to Kikuyu men until, in the course of a generation or two, they were almost completely absorbed.

The Wandorobo in what is now South Kikuyu lived in fairly large villages where their numbers gave them some protection, and where they could organise their social life so as to have courts of justice and other amenities. When the members of a Ndorobo family sold their hunting lands to the Kikuyu, the senior members of both families had to call in witnesses, and these sales were effected with the knowledge and consent of the Ndorobo leaders. They were not simply casual negotiations by individuals, unrecognised by law.

The fact that the Wandorobo used their land only for hunting and did not cultivate it does not in the least invalidate their claim that the land was theirs to sell. Nor does it mean that they did not sell the land, or that they merely received compensation for the loss of hunting rights. It would be as unjust to deny that the Wandorobo were the owners of their land as to claim that the grouse moors and deer forests of Scotland do not belong to those who hold title deeds for them.

As an illiterate people, the Wandorobo never had written records in the form of title deeds and maps, but the fact that both they themselves and their neighbours acknowledged the legal rights of each family to the land on which its members hunted must surely be regarded as proof that the land was owned in accordance with the laws and customs then obtaining.

If we grant that the Wandorobo did, in fact, own the land which they occupied, we may still ask why the Kikuyu paid so many of their valued goats and sheep to them, when, by dint of sheer numbers, they could easily have driven them out and acquired the land by right of (p.90) conquest.

The answer is very largely to be found in the Kikuyu belief in the power of departed spirits. They believed, absolutely, that if they took the land by force, the spirits of the Wandorobo who were killed defending their land would render the Kikuyu occupation of that land useless. They would bring supernatural punishment upon the invaders, cause their flocks and herds to die, their crops to fail, and drought to destroy the land. Furthermore, the Kikuyu knew very well that if the members of one Kikuyu family, or clan, were to seize and appropriate the land of any Ndorobo family by force of arms, the Wandorobo so dispossessed could easily go and make friendly overtures to another Kikuyu family and get them to come and recapture the land in return for a part of it. The family that had seized the land without the consent of the past owners would have had no redress in Kikuyu law, which did not recognise land ownership unless the land had been acquired by specific methods and with the consent of the previous owners.

In view of all this, when the Kikuyu crossed the Chania River in search of fresh land and found it already in the possession of the Wandorobo, they felt that they had to take steps to acquire the land legally and with the consent of the existing owners.

Individual Kikuyu families, therefore, entered into negotiations with the Ndorobo families living there, and having offered goats and sheep as purchase price and found persons willing to sell, they proposed ceremonies of "mutual adoption" as a preliminary to the negotiations which were to follow.

The Significance of the Ceremony of Mutual Adoption

From the point of view of the white man, it would seem quite unnecessary that a sale of land by the member of one tribe to the member of another tribe should be preceded by a ceremony of mutual adoption. It is therefore necessary to study the reasons which made the Kikuyu insist upon such a ceremony, as well as the reason the Wandorobo so readily acceded to it.

Within the Kikuyu tribe, any person who stole the property of any other member of the tribe, or who killed, wounded, or otherwise harmed such a person, became liable by law to criminal proceedings. This law applied not only to persons who were members of the tribe by birth, but also to all who had become members of the tribe by adoption. If any Kikuyu, therefore, were to kill or harm an adopted (p.91) Ndorobo, he would be held responsible in Kikuyu law and would be punished.

On the other hand, if a member of the Kikuyu tribe were to kill, wound or steal from a member of any other tribe who had not been adopted, he was not responsible by Kikuyu law, and was not legally liable for damages. He was, however, likely to be punished by the members of that other tribe, and, still more important, by the departed spirit of the deceased person, had he killed someone.

When a Kikuyu adopted a Ndorobo as a member of his family (by means of the solemn ceremony to be described in this chapter), he bound that Ndorobo, as well as his family, to him by very special ties. He also bound himself to protect the Ndorobo, his family, and all his property. At the same time, the Ndorobo, who had laws similar to those of the Kikuyu on such matters, bound himself to treat the Kikuyu who had adopted him as a brother and fellow tribesman. In other words, the adoption ceremony provided a mutual safeguard and guarantee of good faith.

The oaths which the Kikuyu took in the adoption ceremony made him vulnerable to both supernatural and judicial punishment if he failed in any of his obligations to the man he had adopted, or from whom he proposed to purchase land. He also obtained, in exchange, oaths from

the Ndorobo which bound him to act fairly and justly in all his dealings with the Kikuyu. The adoption ceremony, which took place in the presence of many witnesses from both sides, also bound both parties to avenge the death of members of either tribe. This meant that once the ceremony had taken place the Kikuyu land purchaser could go into the forests he had purchased without fear of being attacked or killed by other Wandorobo, as they all would know that he had been adopted by one of their own tribe. Similarly, the members of the Ndorobo family who had been adopted could come and go freely in Kikuyu country, since, as adopted members of the Kikuyu tribe, any person who killed them would, by Kikuyu law, become liable to a fine of 100 goats and sheep.

If after adoption ceremony was over the Ndorobo failed in his obligations, the Kikuyu, as an adopted Ndorobo, could claim against him in the Ndorobo courts, and similarly, if the Kikuyu failed to honour his obligations he could be sued by the Ndorobo in the Kikuyu courts.

If a land transaction took place without preliminary ceremony of adoption, neither party would feel in any way bound to honour the agreement. There would be no legal support for either party in the case of a breach of contract, for the whole proceedings would be outside (p.92) the jurisdiction of either the Kikuyu or the Wandorobo courts. By means of the adoption ceremony the transaction was placed on a legal footing for both parties, and became absolutely binding for both.

Details of the Ceremonies concerning the Sale of Land by the Wandorobo to the Kikuyu

Although there is no means of determining exact dates, it is reasonably certain that the Kikuyu first started buying land from the Wandorobo south of the Chania River about 300 years ago. This can be deduced from the fact that, though the process of expansion was a slow one, the Kikuyu had already purchased all the available land as far as Kiambu by five generations ago, that is, about 150 years ago. As proof of this we can quote the fact that the land which belonged to the sub-clan of Njũnũ (*Mbarĩ a Njũnũ*) was acquired by Njũnũ when he was already a married man. Njũnũ was the great-great-grandfather of the late Chief Koinange who was a man of about 60 in 1938 and then head of that whole sub-clan.

In view of the fact that the transactions for the greater part of the country took place at such a remote date, we have no actual record, other than tradition, of the exact nature of these negotiations. There is no reason to believe, however, that the negotiations that took place up to the time of the coming of Europeans to the Dagoretti and Mũgũga regions differed in any important respect from the later negotiations, so that if we describe these from the information of men who participated in them, we shall have a fair picture of the form which they took ealier.

Negotiating a Land Transaction

Although there seems to be little doubt that in the early days it was the Kikuyu who approached the Wandorobo and asked to be allowed to buy their land, it seems equally certain that after a comparatively short time the first moves in a land negotiation were often made by the Wandorobo, and it became the recognised custom during the closing years of the nineteenth century for a Kikuyu to wait until he heard that a Ndorobo wished to dispose of some of his land before he attempted to make contact with him. A man who wished to buy land never approached a landowner and asked him to sell a portion of his (p.93) land until the latter had already indicated that he had land that he wished to sell.

In the olden days, according to men who were 70 and 80 years old in 1938 and who remembered transactions that took place in their boyhood, the recognised practice was as follows: In times of disaster such as the rinderpest outbreak, which killed off much of the game; or drought, which caused game migration, individual Wandorobo families suffered serious food shortage, and were faced with famine. They would then go into that part of the country already in the hands of the Kikuyu in search of a wealthy man who would give them goats and sheep and agricultural produce in return for land. Such a Ndorobo, if he valued his life, had to take great care to act in accordance with recognised intertribal law. By this I mean, the practices recognised by the Kikuyu, Kamba, Maasai, and Wandorobo alike, regarding entrance by a stranger into the land of some other tribe.

It was recognised practice for a man going into the territory of another tribe on a peaceful errand to be accompanied by a woman and carry certain recognised tokens of peace, known collectively as *mũrĩca*. When, therefore, a Ndorobo had decided to part with some of his land in return for stock, he would warn his wife to get ready, and on the day fixed they would take with them the following *mũrĩca* objects: a staff anointed with oil, a stool, a sleeping mat of leather, a branding iron such as the Wandorobo used to brand their honey barrels, and a razor.

If a man was accompanied by his wife and was carrying these objects, no Kikuyu would attack them, for by intertribal law anyone who killed a person carrying *mũrĩca* tokens would be punished by God. If his crime was discovered by the members of his tribe, they would kill him for having dishonoured the recognised intertribal code, and if he committed his crime so secretly that no one knew of it, he could still not escape the wrath of God and the spirits, and would certainly perish within a few months by supernatural intervention.

Having entered Kikuyu territory on a land sale errand, the Ndorobo and his wife would go the first big Kikuyu village they came to and ask to directed to the hut of its leading elder. They entered it without speaking a word. Because they were carrying *mũrĩca* objects, the man whose hut they so entered had to give them hospitality and had to enquire into their errand. After eating, the Ndorobo would start the proceedings by stating that he had land which he wished to sell. If the Kikuyu whose hut he had entered wished to buy land, and was in a position to do so, they then made plans for further meetings.

Often, however, the Ndorobo would find that the hut he had first (p.94) entered was that of a person who did not want land, or was not in a position to buy it. It then became the duty of that Kikuyu to assist the man to find a buyer. Moreover, the Kikuyu became responsible for the safety of his visitor, and had to provide him with an escort while he went further afield in search of a buyer.

Similarly, if a Kikuyu badly wanted to purchase land and knew of no Ndorobo who was anxious to sell, he could go with *mũrĩca* objects to the nearest Ndorobo village, and, having entered it, require the man who received him to put him in touch with any Ndorobo who wished to dispose of land.

No Ndorobo ever offered the whole of a hunting estate for sale at one time. He always retained part of it for the continuation of his hunting and trapping activities or for his beekeeping. Moreover, he usually made an arrangement with the purchaser of the land that he, the Ndorobo, and his family, would trap all game coming to eat the crops in the area which had been sold for cultivation. This arrangement was of mutual benefit. The Kikuyu did not eat the meat of most wild animals and so had no wish to claim any animals trapped on their land, but they were anxious to have such animals hunted by experts. From the point of view of the Wandorobo it was also advantageous, because animals such as wild pig, giant forest hog, eland, bushbuck, waterbuck, and even bongo, were

irresistibly drawn to fields of corn and sweet potatoes, and could be more easily trapped there than in the forest itself.

When a Ndorobo had come into Kikuyu country with *mũrĩca* objects, and had made contact with a Kikuyu who wished to buy land, arrangements were made between the two parties for an adoption ceremony to take place on a given day. The Ndorobo would then be escorted back to the edge of the forest and would go home to make plans for the ceremony, to which he had to bring witnesses from his tribe. The Kikuyu, who would be host at the ceremony, as it always took place in Kikuyu country, would get busy with his preparations.

The Ceremony of Adoption—Preliminaries

The ceremony of adoption was an important and serious affair. As we have seen, one of its main objects was to bind the two families that were about to enter into a land transaction into the closest possible terms of friendship, so that each would act fairly and justly in dealing with the other. In addition, the two people who were thus mutually adopted, and their families, were to become, henceforward, members (p.95) of two tribes instead of one. It was, therefore, very important that there should be an ample number of witnesses.

The Kikuyu, as part of the arrangements for the ceremony, sent invitations to the leaders of the various judicial councils (*athamaki a kĩama*) in all the neighbouring territorial units, as well as to those of his own territorial unit. Their presence was essential, since in the event of any dispute arising later over the agreement made between the two parties the matter would go to the courts, whose members would have full knowledge of the facts. The Kikuyu also sent invitations to all the male members of his own family, both those living near at hand and those living at a distance. Their presence was desirable, but not essential, for if some epidemic were to kill off the purchaser and his immediate family, his more distant relatives would become heirs, not only to his property, but to his responsibilities. Moreover, since the Ndorobo was to become a member of the family, it was desirable that all, or as many as possible, of the members of that family should meet him and know him personally.

Invitations were also sent to all those persons who were members of the village in which the Kikuyu purchaser lived. These people, being neighbours, had to be aware of the transaction so that they would not harm the Ndorobo once he had been adopted.

The man arranging the ceremony had to send a request to all his near relatives and friends to prepare food and drink as a contribution to the feast, since everyone who came to the ceremony would expect food and drink in plenty. He had also to make the following preparations in his own homestead:

1. He had to have quantities of food and drink prepared for the day by his wives and family.

2. He had to have some special ceremonial honey mead (*ũũkĩ mũruge*) prepared in addition to ordinary sugar-cane beer.

3. He had to obtain from a blacksmith the following new iron objects: a razor (*rũenji*), a bleeding arrow (*ndĩa*), a branding iron (*ruoro*), and an awl (*mũkuha*).

4. He had also to have in readiness: some *ira* powder, some finger millet (*ũgĩmbĩ*), some specially prepared castor oil, an ox, a fat ram, some butter (*ngorono*), a stool (*gĩtĩ*), a sleeping mat (*ndarũa*), the milk of a ewe that had just given birth to its lamb (*iria rĩa mwatĩ*), the milk of a heifer that had just had its first calf (*iria rĩa mori*), and some honey (*ũũkĩ*).

The Ndorobo, for his part, had to bring with him his senior wife, his eldest son and other male children, some of his brothers, a few (p.96) independent Ndorobo witnesses, and the following objects: a razor, a staff (*rũthanju*) which had been well anointed with fat as a sign that he came peaceably, a stool, and his own sleeping mat (but this was not essential).

The Ndorobo was expected to arrive during the evening of the day before the mutual adoption ceremony was to take place, and having been formally received by the Kikuyu with whom he was going to perform it, he and all the other Wandorobo were taken to a nearby homestead to spend the night. They might not, in any circumstances, sleep in the homestead of the man who was going to participate in the ceremony with them on the following day.

The Ceremony of Adoption—The Rites on the Actual Day

Early in the morning of the day of the ceremony, the Kikuyu had to get up and make the normal offerings of sugar-cane beer to the ancestral spirits in accordance with the recognised practice connected with any brewing of beer. He had also, however, to pour out a special offering of honey mead to his ancestors and make special prayers to them for their blessing upon the ceremony of adoption. (See Chapter 8).

When this had been done, a message was sent requesting the Ndorobo, his family, and his witnesses to come over from the homestead where they had spent the night. When they arrived, an ox was slaughtered in their presence. While this ox was being skinned and cut up ready for the feasting later in the day, all the invited guests began to arrive, and when all were present, the ceremony began. The whole proceeding was directed by senior elders who had taken part in such adoption ceremonies on other occasions and who, therefore, were well acquainted with the procedure.

The ram was slaughtered in the presence of all the assembled people, and its fat taken at once and rendered down in a special new earthenware pot of the type known as a *gacuuri*. This fat would be required in a short time to anoint the stools upon which the two parties to the adoption ceremony were to sit. While the fat was being rendered down, the officiating elders took the skin of the ox and the skin of the ram, and from these they cut strips of rawhide about two feet long and three inches broad, and then cut eyelets in them at either end, large enough to slip over a man's wrist. They also took a new beer drinking horn, and into this they put some of the ceremonial honey mead, together with some of the milk of the ewe and the heifer, and some finger millet grain.

When these things were ready, and when the fat had been rendered down, the officiating elders anointed the stool of the Ndorobo and the stool of the Kikuyu with the following things: some milk of the heifer, some milk of the ewe, some of the specially prepared castor oil, some of the rendered down fat, a mixture of fresh honey and fresh sugar-cane juice, and some butter fat. The two stools, thus anointed, were set down in the middle of the courtyard, with all the assembled people standing round to watch. Next the Ndorobo and the Kikuyu were called forward, and each had to sit down on the stool belonging to the other. The senior wife of each man then approached with the special new razors which they had brought for the purpose, and each woman completely shaved her husband's head. This hair was then put on the seat of the stool upon which the man was sitting, that is to say, the hair of the Kikuyu was put on the stool which belonged to the Ndorobo and the hair of the Ndorobo on the stool of the Kikuyu, and this stuck to the seats, as they had been anointed with honey. The two men then sat down again, each on the hair of the other, and each was given a little *ira* powder in the palm of his left hand. The two men, sitting facing each other, then dipped their right hands into the *ira* powder which was in the left palm, and, having done so, rubbed the

powder on to the right and left temples of the other man, and the remaining powder onto his forehead and the top of his head. This done, each was given a little more *ira* powder, which they rubbed on their own tongues, after which they put a little into their mouths before taking a mouthful of the mixture which had been prepared in the drinking horn (see above). As they did this, all the elders present chanted, "*Ngai iromwenda*" (May the Gods love you). The plural is said to have been used instead of the singular because it was not only the God of the Kikuyu that was being invoked, but also the God of the Wandorobo.

The two men then spat the mixture from their mouths on to the rawhide strips (*ngwaro*), thus blessing them. Then each of the two was given, in the palm of his right hand, a little more of the mixture from the horn. With this he had to wipe away (*ruria*) the *ira* powder which he had earlier put on to the forehead, temples, and head of the other party, and the elders again chanted, "May the Gods love you".

The two men now got up from the stools, which were moved to one side, and the raw oxhide from the ox slaughtered that morning, was brought and laid on the ground where the stools had been. This skin was placed with the fleshy side downwards, and on it the Kikuyu with his senior wife, and the Ndorobo with his senior wife, sat down. The (p.98) Kikuyu and his wife had to face the senior wife's hut with their backs towards the homestead entrance (*thome*), while the Ndorobo and his wife had to have their backs towards the senior wife's hut and be facing the entrance.

After they had sat down, each man called to his senior son and these two came and sat down also, each on the right-hand side of his respective father, facing each other across the space between their parents.

Now the senior elders from other territorial units who had been invited to take part in the ceremony came and assisted the four officiating elders in joining the sons of the two men together with rawhide strips.

In addition to the two rawhide strips, one from the oxhide and one from the ram's hide, there was a third which had been cut from stomach of the ram. This was put with the one made from the ram skin, and the two together were treated and spoken of as if they were one strip (*rũkwaro*). All these strips had already been blessed, as described above.

The senior council leader (*mũthamaki*) present, now took the two ram strips (which counted as one) and slipped the eyelets of one end over the right wrist of the Kikuyu man's son, and the eyelets of the other end of the same strip over the right wrist of the Ndorobo's son. Then another elder took the oxhide strip and slipped one eyelet of this over the Kikuyu son's left wrist, passing it under the ram strips, and on to the left wrist of the Ndorobo's son.

The officiating elders now handed the Kikuyu man a specially prepared piece of *mũthakwa* wood shaped like a knife, and directed him to draw this symbolic knife seven times across the middle of the strips that linked the two sons, and, as he did so, to repeat after the elders the following seven vows:

1. *Niĩ, mũndũ ũkauria thakame ya mwathi ũyũ wakwa amũũrage, aaga kũndĩha igana, ndĩrotuĩka ũguo*.
As for me, if any man draws blood of this my Ndorobo and kills him, and if I do not make him pay me a full 100 (goats and sheep understood), may I break thus.

2. *Niĩ, ingĩkamwĩta mwathi, ndue atĩ ti Mũgĩkũyũ witũ, ndĩrotuĩka ũguo*.
As for me, if I should ever call him a Ndorobo and suggest that he is not a Kikuyu, and one of us, may I break thus.

3. *Niĩ, itarĩmũtuaga ta mũrũ wa maitũ, ndĩrotuĩka ũguo.*
As for me, if I should fail to treat him as the son of my own mother, may I break thus.

4. *Niĩ, ingĩkamwathĩra mũndũ amũũrage nĩ getha ndĩmũtunye gĩthaka gĩake itarĩhĩte, ndĩrotuĩka ũguo.*
As for me, if I should ever seek out someone and tell him to kill him in order that I may acquire his land without paying for it to the full may I break thus.

p.99
5. *Niĩ, nyũmba ĩngĩ ĩngĩgaũka gĩthaka gĩkĩ ngũgũra kũrĩ mwathi ũyũ twaciarana nake, twaaga gũcira, ndĩrotuĩka ũguo.*
As for me, if any other family should try to enter illegally upon this land that I am going to buy from the Ndorobo who is performing the adoption ceremony with me, and if I fail to sue him for so doing, may 1 break thus.

6. *Niĩ ingĩkaga kũmũhe ciigana ũna nĩ getha mũmenye nĩ wa maitũ, ndĩrotuĩka ũguo.*
As for me, if I should fail to give him a present of so many goats and sheep (here he made a gesture with his hands to indicate the number in terms of units of ten) in order that you may all know that he is now my mother's son, may I break thus.

7 *Niĩ, ingĩendia mwana, ndaaga kũmwĩta arĩe ngoima cia mũhĩrĩga, ndĩrotuĩka ũguo.*
As for me, if when a child of mine marries, and I fail to invite him to come and share in eating the family *ngoima* (fat, stall-fed beast—see glossary), may I break thus.

When the Kikuyu had taken his seven vows, and with each vow had made a symbolic cut across the strips which linked the two sons, the wooden knife was handed to the Ndorobo, and he was directed to act in a similar way, and to repeat the following seven vows:

1. *Niĩ, nondũ ndoka kũrĩ ũyũ rĩu, itarĩ wake, ndĩrotuĩka ũguo.*
As for me, since now I have come to this man, not being his kin, if now I am not his, may I break thus.

2. *Niĩ, kĩrĩa ngũmwĩrĩra niĩ ingĩmũhenia, ndĩrotuĩka ũguo.*
As for me, in respect of the promises I am making to him, if I should break them, may I break thus.

3. *Niĩ, ingĩkamũkunyanĩra aũragwo nĩmwathi ũngĩ kana nĩ Mũũkabi, ndĩrotuĩka ũguo.*
As for me, if I should betray him so that he is killed by another Ndorobo or by a Maasai through me, may I break thus.

4. *Niĩ, ndĩwa kĩruka kĩa Ndũrũbũ, itarĩ rĩu Mũgĩkũyũ, ndĩrotuĩka ũguo.*
As for me, though I still remain a Ndorobo, if I am not now also a Kikuyu, may I break thus.

5. *Niĩ, Mũndũrũbũ ũngĩ angĩkaũraga Mũgĩkũyũ ũyũ wakwa, ndaaga kũmũcemera rĩake tũmũũrage, ndĩrotuĩka ũguo.*
As for me, if any other Ndorobo should kill this my Kikuyu, and if I should fail to help you spy out his homestead so that we can kill him, may I break thus.

6. *Niĩ, angĩkacirithio nĩ mũndũ ũngĩ nĩ ũndũ wa gĩthaka kĩu, ndaaga gũcira na mũndũ ũcio ndĩmwonie kũrĩa twahakanĩte nake, ndĩrotuĩka ũguo.*
As for me, if any man should bring an action against this man in connection with this land (that I am selling him), and I fail to take part and show the boundaries that I fixed, may I break thus.

p.100
7. *Niĩ, ndacoka gũthama ta Ndorobo ndige ũyũ twaciarana nake, ndĩrotuĩka ũguo.*
As for me, if I should resume the Ndorobo habit of moving my homestead about and should thus abandon this man with whom I have performed this mutual adoption ceremony, may I break thus.

After both parties had taken their solemn oaths, the Kikuyu council elders took a knife, a razor, and an awl, and holding these together, one of them cut the strips that linked the sons. While this was being done, the two lads had to hold each other's hands firmly, right hand in right hand, and left in left, with the left arms passing under the right. Then they were instructed to let go of each other, and each wound· the loose ends of the strips that were on his wrists round his forearms.

Now the officiating elders brought the roasted breast (*gĩthũri*) of the ram, and this was handed to the son of the Kikuyu, who took the same seven oaths as his father. At the conclusion of each oath he bit off a piece of the ram's breast and ate it, saying, instead of the words "**Ndĩro***tuĩka ũguo*" ('May I break thus'), the words, "*Ndĩrorĩo nĩ nyama ĩno*" ('May I be consumed by this meat').

The joint was then handed to the Ndorobo's son, who took the oaths that his father had taken, and he, too, concluded each oath with the words, "May I be consumed by this meat".

When this part of the ceremony had been concluded, most of the people present proceeded to feast on the food that had been prepared and on the meat of the ox. Meanwhile, the next stage of the proceedings was started.

The parties to the adoption ceremony got up off the oxhide mat. The wife of the Kikuyu took the stool on which the Ndorobo had sat, which belonged to her husband, and to which the hair of the Ndorobo now adhered, and she put this in her hut, while the wife of the Ndorobo took her husband's stool, upon which the Kikuyu had sat, and which now had his hair on it. This she put in the men's hut (*thingira*), which would be the headquarters of the Ndorobo family till they went home the next day. The Kikuyu woman then returned and took to her hut the oxhide on which the parties had sat, for that is where it would be kept in the future.

The Ndorobo and his wife and son, and all the members of his family, but not the independent Ndorobo witnesses who had accompanied him as visitors, next retired to the hut of the senior wife of the Kikuyu. She was now their mother (*nyina wao*), and here the families ate an ordinary meal together, and also some of the boiled meat of the slaughtered ram. This ceremonial meal symbolized union of the two families.

p.101
When the meal was over, the Kikuyu proceeded to the ceremony of presenting the special beer that had been brewed for the Ndorobo in accordance with recognised Kikuyu procedure. That portion of the beer that the Ndorobo handed back to his host was sent out to the guests in the courtyard, while the Ndorobo gave his portion to those Wandorobo whom he had brought as witnesses, and to such Kikuyu elders as he chose to ask to drink with them.

Everyone who was old enough now set to beer drinking, but the principal parties to the ceremony, including the chief witnesses, took care not to drink too much. They must not get drunk yet, since the ceremonies were not over.

When all the ordinary guests had drunk their share of the beer, they departed, leaving only the two families and the chief witnesses for both sides.

Now the Kikuyu presented the Ndorobo with a gift of 30 or 40 goats and sheep, in accordance with the sixth oath which he had taken. To these he added a he-goat called *thenge ya kĩrige* (a he-goat for roasting), and a ram called *ndũrũme ya andũ ao* (a ram for relatives). This present of goats and sheep was called collectively, "goats and sheep to obtain him a wife" (*mbũri cia kũmũgũrĩra mũka*). They were given as a present to the Ndorobo as proof to the witnesses that the Kikuyu formally acknowledged his obligation to treat the Ndorobo as a member of his family, even to the extent of providing him, or his son, with a wife.

The Ndorobo, on his part, in the presence of the witnesses, announced that he intended to give the Kikuyu a "free gift" of a small part of the land that he intended to sell. This was a formal acknowledgement of his new and special relationship with the Kikuyu.

According to Kikuyu ideas, this formal exchange of presents between the two parties was absolutely essential before they could proceed to the more serious business of buying and selling a larger area of land. Further, the exchange of presents was essential in order to "raise them up from their oath taking" (*ũkĩria andũ muuma-inĩ*), that is to say, in order that they might not suffer any ill from the oaths they had taken.

If' after having sworn to be brothers and members of the same family, they failed to make presents to each other before proceeding to business matters, they would be breaking their oaths and so would die from perjuring themselves.

When this exchange presents had been completed, the Ndorobo chose a day when he would be ready to take the Kikuyu, with members of his family and independent witnesses, to see the boundaries, not only of the land that he was giving as a present, but of the much larger area that he was offering to sell.

p.102
In the evening before the proceeding came to an end (in a few cases the little ceremony to be described took place before the other ceremonies), the council elders who had been officiating at the ceremony took some of the fat of the ram, together with what was left of the milk of the ewe and heifer, and some of the specially brewed castol oil, and with this mixture they anointed the Ndorobo's stool and sandals, and the razor and branding iron that he brought with him and also the bleeding arrow and awl, which were then handed to him by the Kikuyu.

The Ceremony of Showing the Boundaries

On the day before that fixed by the Ndorobo to show the Kikuyu the boundaries, the former prepared honey beer, while the latter got ready the things that he had to take. These were: a sword (*rũhiũ*), an axe (*ithanwa*), a branding iron (*ruoro*), a small barrel for storing honey (*kihembe*), and "a virgin ewe for the stinging nettles" (*mwati wa njegeni*, see glossary).

Without the transfer of these five things (or their equivalent) no land transaction was regarded by the Kikuyu as a legal sale. Any transfer that took place without them was treated only as a temporary mortgage and not an outright sale.

By custom, a man did not have to hand over the actual objects named in the list above, but could substitute for each of them one ram or he-goat. If he did so, when he handed the animals over in the presence of the witnesses to the transaction, he had to say, as he handed each over, "This is the sword, this is the axe, this is the honey barrel, this is the branding iron". Even as he handed over a ram he said, "This is the virgin ewe".

Besides taking the five objects enumerated above (or animal substitutes for them) the Kikuyu had to take with him ten goats and sheep and "a ram for the stomach contents" (*ndũrũme ya taatha*). When he set out in the morning to go to the Ndorobo's village he had to be accompanied by his brothers, half-brothers, and sons, as well as by a certain number of Kikuyu *athamaki a kĩama* (senior elders of the *kĩama* councils), as independent witnesses.

Having arrived at the village of the Ndorobo, they were met by him, his sons, and some Ndorobo elders. The whole party then set off into the forest to a point on the boundary where there was a big tree. Here the ram they had brought was slaughtered by some of the Kikuyu (p.103) elders who had come as witnesses, and the whole of its stomach contents (*taatha*) were taken out and tied in bundles of *mũthakwa* leaves. These bundles were then carried by two of the elders, while one or

two others were left behind to skin and cut up the animal and to roast it in readiness for the return of the party.

The party of Wandorobo and Kikuyu now formed into a procession, in single file, and set out to go right round the boundaries, first of that piece of land which the Ndorobo was giving as a gift, and then of the piece of land that was to be sold. The procession was organised as follows: first of all went the Ndorobo, followed by his sons and witnesses, then the Kikuyu elders, who carried the stomach contents of the ram, together with one or two other independent Kikuyu witnesses; after them came the Kikuyu who was going to buy the land, and, in turn, his brothers, sons, and witnesses.

The Ndorobo, who was leading, cut his way through the bush along the line of the boundary, and he pointed out all the boundary marks that formed the limit of the land to be handed over. These included large outstanding trees, old game pits, projecting rocks, and in many cases the course of a stream. When a tree formed one of the boundary marks, the witnesses cut a blaze on the side of the trunk, sprinkled some of the stomach contents of the ram at the foot of the tree, and rubbed some into the blaze. Where an old game pit was pointed out, stomach contents were sprinkled into it and its exact position in relation to other natural objects, such as trees, was noted by the witnesses. Where a stream formed the boundary, the witnesses sprinkled stomach contents into it as well, and put some on all outstanding rocks along the bank.

If the area that was being given as a present was a large one, the Ndorobo showed only this boundary on the first day, and the party, having returned to the starting point, ate the meat of the ram, postponing the rest of the business till the next day.

If, however, only a small area was being given, the party proceeded to tread the boundaries of the part to be sold, in a similar way, as soon as they finished going round the first part. If necessary, a second ram was sent for, this time from the Ndorobo village, and was taken from among those "given" to the Ndorobo a few days before. This was also slaughtered to provide more stomach contents for the marking of the boundary.

When the whole of the boundaries had been shown and marked in the presence of the witnesses, they all proceeded to eat the meat of the ram at the place where it was slaughtered. Then the Kikuyu party went with the Ndorobo party back to the Ndorobo village, where, in (p.104) the presence of witnesses, the Kikuyu handed over the five objects that sealed the contract, as well as the ten goats and sheep, which were called *mbũri cia kũmũruta gĩthaka* (the goats and sheep to bring him out of the estate). These were a special fee to the Ndorobo to compensate him for disturbance, and had nothing to do with the purchase price.

Then, in the presence of witnesses, the Ndorobo stated the exact number of animals that he had agreed to sell the land for, this sum having been agreed upon privately between the two contracting parties beforehand. The Kikuyu then solemnly pledged himself to pay off this debt as soon as possible, either in one payment or in a series of small payments. Usually the Ndorobo requested that payment be made over a long period, as he did not wish to have a large number of goats and sheep on his hands at once.

Before departing, the Kikuyu appointed a day upon which the Ndorobo and some of his friends were to come to his home to receive the first payment for the land, and to drink the ceremonial beer that he would prepare for them. This was called "honey beer to take the thorns out of him" (*ũũkĩ wa kũmũruta mĩigua*), and was a beer drink to compensate for all the thorns that had pricked

him as he hacked his way through the bush in advance of the rest of the party when showing them the boundaries. The Kikuyu had also, on this occasion, to hand over a *ndũrũme ya mĩigua* (ram for the thorns) and a virgin ewe.

The payment of these two animals was, according to Kikuyu law, comparable to the payment of *mbũri cia kĩrĩra* (customary gift of goats and sheep), which were given to the mother's brother of a first-born child at the time of his or her initiation.

By his agreement with the Ndorobo, the Kikuyu who had bought the land also obtained a first option on any contiguous land which the Ndorobo might subsequently wish to sell. If he failed to take up the option, however, when it was offered to him, the Ndorobo could sell to some other Kikuyu, but he would not be adopted by him. Having been once adopted into a Kikuyu family, he now ranked as a member of the Kikuyu tribe, so that if he did later sell to another Kikuyu family), he sold on the basis of one Kikuyu to another.

Whenever a further portion of land was sold, either to the purchaser of the first piece, or to any other man, the same ceremony of marking out the boundaries and the same fees became payable for the new area, but the sale was not preceeded by an adoption ceremony or the exchange of free gifts.

However, when a land sale was effected in such circumstances, the adopted Ndorobo had to give the man who originally adopted him a (p.105) few goats and sheep, which were called *mbũri cia ũgendi*. These corresponded exactly to the sheep and goats which were called by the same name, and which a man had to give one of his brothers when he had married off a daughter and obtained stock from her husband's family as a marriage insurance for her.

Also, after a Kikuyu had adopted a Ndorobo, when any daughter of that Kikuyu married, he had to give the *mbũri cia ũgendi* from that marriage not only to one of his physical brothers, but to the Ndorobo, whose rights in this respect actually took precedence over those of a physical brother.

If a boundary of a piece of land that a Ndorobo was selling marched with the land belonging to some other Ndorobo family, he had to insure that their representatives were present. Moreover, when he was showing the boundary he had to indicate points at which the boundary was the limit of his own land. If the Kikuyu slightly overstepped the new boundary on to land belonging to the man who had sold him a portion it would not be a serious matter. If however, he trespassed even slightly upon the land of another Ndorobo, there would be serious trouble.

Sale of Land by One Kikuyu to Another

When a Kikuyu went through an adoption ceremony of the type already described, not only did the Ndorobo become a Kikuyu while still also retaining his own nationality, but the Kikuyu on his part became a Ndorobo, or, as the Kikuyu called him, a *Mwathi*, while at the same time retaining his Kikuyu status. The Kikuyu who had bought a large tract of forest from a Ndorobo also became a *mwathi* in a different sense, since he was now the owner and ruler over the area of land he had bought, and was in the position to sell it if he so desired.

Since rules governing the sale of land which a man had bought in his own life and owned privately differed from those for land inherited by him as a member of a sub-clan (*mbarĩ*), which normally could be sold only with the consent of the other members, we will consider these two aspects of land sale separately.

Sometimes after a land purchase the Kikuyu or his family found themselves in dire need of stock for payment of blood money for a man killed by a member of the family, or for a marriage payment. In such cases they could legally dispose of a portion of their land by sale, or (p.106) part with it temporarily, as a security for a loan. The latter alternative will be dealt with later.

As we have already seen, when a Kikuyu purchased land from a Ndorobo he commonly bought a larger area than he required for his immediate needs. It was the usual practice for such a man to invite a number of Kikuyu from the more thickly populated areas to come and live on his new estate. The object of this procedure was twofold. Firstly, when a man bought a large tract of forest land he needed a large male population to help him build a big fortified village, so that if a Maasai raiding party penetrated the forests in search of Kikuyu cattle, they would find a strong defence force. A man and his own family alone would be unable to build sufficiently strong defences and they would not be numerous enough to defend the village if attacked. Secondly, the task of felling the forest trees and breaking the land for cultivation was arduous, and could be carried out more easily by a number of people helping each other.

No Kikuyu ever had difficulty in getting families to come live on his land with him. They came as tenants and not as owners of any portion of the land, but they knew that they were more likely to grow rich cultivating a piece of virgin land than they would in their own over-populated area. There would also be better grazing for their stock. It therefore followed that any man who bought land from a Ndorobo soon had a large number of families living on it as his tenants, and living in the same *kĩhingo*, or fortified village, as himself.

If the owner of the land found himself in dire need of stock and decided to sell a portion of his land, he first had to announce the fact to his tenants, and frequently found a purchaser among them. Failing that, he would send word to some of his richer friends in other parts of the country, saying, "I propose to sell a portion of my land. If you wish to buy, or know anyone else who wishes to do so, tell him to get in touch with me at once". Before long a potential purchaser would be found and preliminary negotiations started as to the size of the area for sale, and the purchase price required for it.

Having arranged these details, the purchaser (unless he was already a tenant on the land) had to pay the owner a *ndũrũme ya mathangũ* ('ram for the leaves,' that is, a fee for grazing rights). If the proposed purchaser was already a tenant, he would have paid this fee on becoming one. This ram was slaughtered ceremonially and eaten by the owner of the land and all his available male relatives. A day was then (p.107) fixed for the would-be purchaser to be shown the boundaries, and for the sale to be ratified.

In certain details the ceremonies connected with the sale of land by one Kikuyu to another differed from those we have described for a sale between a Kikuyu and his adopted Ndorobo, so we must consider the ceremony in full.

The owner of the land fixed a day when the purchaser was to be shown the boundaries of the area to be sold, and each party arranged to have independent elders from other families as witnesses to the transaction. These witnesses were requested to bring with them a large number of *itoka* lily bulbs, a species of crinum lily (*Crinum kirkii*), the one used for marking boundaries being the *gĩtoka kĩirũ*, or dark-coloured *gĩtoka*. Only elders were allowed to dig up these plants, but even they might not dig up a whole plant. When bulbs were required for the ceremony of marking out a new boundary, the elders who had been invited to come as witnesses had to dig up a number of

bulbs from well established plants along the boundaries of their own estates, and bring them with them.

Both the vendor and the purchaser arranged for as many of the male members of their families as possible to be present, and the purchaser brought a ram "for the stomach contents". When everybody was assembled, they proceeded to a point on the new boundary that would divide the land to be sold from the remaining portion of the estate. Here the ram was slaughtered by some of the witnesses, who took out the stomach contents and dipped all the crinum lily bulbs into them. The rest of the stomach contents were then wrapped in *mũthakwa* leaves and carried by the witnesses. The procession moved off. The seller of the land went first, cutting leafy branches (*mathĩgĩ*) at intervals and sticking them into the ground at fixed points along the line. He was followed by his own family. Then came the witnesses of both parties, who dug a hole at each point where such a stem had been put, and sprinkled some of the stomach contents at the bottom of the hole before planting a crinum lily bulb in it.

At intervals, the vendor pointed out a big tree as one of the boundary marks, and a crinum lily bulb was planted at the foot of each such tree. Where a part of the boundary consisted of a stream, no bulb was planted along its bank, but some stomach contents were sprinkled along it, and rubbed on to projecting rocks.

Certain Kikuyu families did not use the crinum lily to mark boundaries. In place of this plant, cuttings from one of the following three (p.108) trees were used: *mwatha*, *mũgumo*, or *mũringa*. These three trees, like the crinum lily, were not easily killed by a forest fire, and would grow again after being scorched. There was little fear of any human wilfully destroying boundary plants, for all Kikuyu believed that any person who did so would die almost immediately as a result of supernatural intervention.

In some parts of Kikuyu country big stones were buried along the line of the boundary under, or near to, the crinum lily plants. This was an additional safeguard lest, at some later date, a dishonest successor of the original buyer or seller should try to move the plants and alter the boundary. If he did so, he would probably not know of the stones. These could be found, however, and his crime could be detected.

After the boundaries had been marked, the sale had to be ratified by a ceremony in which the purchaser handed over to the seller the same five objects used to mark the completion of a land transaction between a Kikuyu and a Ndorobo, namely, a branding iron, a razor, an axe, a honey barrel, and a "ewe for the stinging nettles". In place of each or all of these a recognised substitute could be given.

The purchaser of the land also had to provide a he-goat "for roasting and eating together" (*ya kĩrige*), and the family that had sold the land had to provide either a he-goat or an ox for slaughter to "seal the contract" (*ya kũguraria*). These two animals were similar to those provided to sign and seal a marriage transaction, and it is significant, perhaps, that a man who had purchased land became known, henceforward, as a relation-in-law (*mũthoni*) of the family from which he had bought land. He had "married the land" of the other family, and that land now became legally his instead of theirs. Either party to a land transaction could withdraw and break off negotiations at any point up to the time of this final ratification.

A man who had bought land in this way became its absolute owner in law. He could resell or otherwise dispose of it in any way he wished, should he so desire.

Although not legally bound to do so, he was, however, morally bound, if he wanted to resell at some later date, to give the first option to the original owner or his descendants. But if he failed to do so, the original owner had no legal case against him.

The Kikuyu concept of the transaction is summed up in their own words: *Ekwĩgũrĩra na aathingũria, na aagurarĩrio; gĩthaka kĩu nĩ gĩake o kũrĩa angĩenda kũhira, kana kwendia*. (He has bought it for himself, and completed the payment for it, and having had the transaction sealed and certified for him, the land is then his alone, and he may dispose it and sell it as and when it pleases him).

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The Gĩthaka System

Having examined the methods by which the Kikuyu first acquired land south of the Chania River, and by which they went on acquiring it right up to the end of the nineteenth century, we must proceed to study in detail the way in which land units were administered, sub-divided, and controlled, and the various laws and customs related thereto.

The Kikuyu term for a unit of land, or an estate, is *gĩthaka*, a word whose other meaning is bush land, or uncultivated land, as we have seen at the beginning of this chapter. Some of the large estates bought directly from the Wandorobo and never subdivided by subsequent sales covered an area of up to 20 square miles. From this immense size downward to about 50 acres, almost any intermediate size could be found. Really small estates of 15 or 20 acres do not seem to have existed in the forest areas. Unless a man could afford to buy an area of at least 50 acres, he did not, in the old days, buy at all. He either remained on the estate of his own family or became a tenant on someone else's.

With the advent of the twentieth century this ceased to be the case, and in modern times there has been a great deal of subdivision, so that some land units are only an acre or so in extent. That, however, is an aspect of the situation with which we are not concerned in this study.

The man who bought the land became the *mwathi* (ruler of the land). If it was bought by several brothers jointly, then the senior brother, who was in charge of the negotiations on behalf of his brothers and himself, was the *mwathi*, but the others had equal rights in respect of the estate, subject to any special agreements made between them at the time of the purchase.

During the lifetime of an individual purchaser, he alone had the right of disposal of a part, or the whole, of the estate. If it had been purchased by several brothers jointly, the right of disposal was vested in the senior brother, who had carried out the negotiations. The other brothers had, however, some say in the matter, and they could claim right to dispose of a part of the estate proportionate to the amount they had contributed to the purchase price. They could not, however, sell their portion without first offering it to the remaining members of the family syndicate, who would usually exercise their option so as to prevent subdivision of the estate. In the event of the (p.110) other brothers' being unable to exercise their option, it could be sold to an outsider after consultation with them.

Once the original owner, or owners, had died, the whole of his or their land became the joint property of his or their sons and male descendants, who, with their families, were now recognised as a sub-clan (*mbarĩ*), and the land that passed jointly to these male descendants became known from then on as the estate (*gĩthaka*) of the sub-clan. Thus, if a man called Kĩhara had originally bought the land, that land, after his death, was no longer called the Estate of Kĩhara (*Gĩthaka gĩa*

Kĩhara), but the Estate of the Sub-clan of Kĩhara (*Gĩthaka kĩa Mbarĩ a Kĩhara*). The only exception would be in a case where a part of the land had been apportioned to a particular son during the owner's lifetime. For instance, if the said Kĩhara had specifically given a certain portion of his estate to one son, Njoroge, during his lifetime, then that portion of the estate would become, on his death, the Estate of Njoroge (*Gĩthaka kĩa Njoroge*), while the remaining portion would be land held jointly by the Sub-clan of Kĩhara (*Mbarĩ a Kĩhara*). In actual practice, however, it was rare for a man to give any portion of his land outright to one son.

In the case of an estate that had been acquired jointly by several brothers, the next eldest surviving member of the brothers that had bought the land became the titular head on the death of the one who had been the leader in the negotiations. This went on until every one of the original purchasers was dead. The whole estate then became an estate owned by a sub-clan, which took its name from the eldest of the original brothers, and it was the recognised custom for their male descendants to appoint one of their number to be a trustee (*mũramati*) for the others, and the titular head on their behalf. The man chosen to be the trustee was usually the eldest male of the family. He did not take the position, however, by right of seniority, but by election, and he held the position only by the consent of the other joint owners. If he was not satisfactory, they had the right to remove him and appoint another of their number in his stead.

When an estate had passed into the hands of the male descendants, and become a sub-clan estate, each male member had well defined cultivation and grazing rights.

Any land that was actually under cultivation by a member of the landowning family at the time the land became jointly owned, remained in his possession, though he could not claim anything more than the prior right to cultivate it. The ownership of the land itself, as distinct from the prior right to cultivate, was vested in the sub-clan as a whole. Moreover, the prior right to cultivate any portions of the (p.111) estate that had been formerly cultivated but were temporarily lying fallow (*ngamba*), was vested in the children of the woman who had owner of the field (*mũgũnda*) before it was left to fallow.

All land which was uncultivated, and which had never been cultivated, as well as any formerly cultivated land which had been lying fallow so long that it had become practically indistinguishable from virgin bush, was held by the trustee on behalf of the sub-clan.

Subject to the agricultural and grazing needs of the other members of the sub-clan, any member might clear an uncultivated portion of the land for himself and his family, but before doing so he had to obtain formal permission from the trustee. This, in fact, was one of the trustee's chief functions—to see that all members of the sub-clan had ample land for their needs, and that no one member acquired excessive cultivation rights to the detriment of the others. (For instance, if the estate contained only a limited amount of land suitable for growing sugar-cane, the trustee had to see to it that no one member of the sub-clan acquired cultivation rights over an unfair proportion of it).

In all minor matters connected with sub-clan land, the trustee could take action and make decisions without consulting the others, but in any major issue he had to call a meeting of the male adults of the family and allow the decision to be made by them as a whole.

On all parts of the estate every member had equal grazing rights, provided that they grazed only on uncultivated land and that they respected the recognised grazing rules.

Alternative Method of Dividing an Estate (***Gĩthaka***)

Upon the death of the man, or men, who had originally bought an estate, there was an alternative method of apportioning it to the sub-clan.

While retaining the joint ownership of the whole estate, the family might decide not to appoint a single trustee, but to subdivide the estate among the first-born sons of each widow of the deceased owner or owners. If such a division was effected, each eldest son (*irigithathi*) became the sole controller of the portion allotted to him. He had to provide cultivation areas on it for himself, his wives, and his widowed mother, and also for all his uterine brothers. The land so entrusted to him did not become his own private property, or even the property of him and his uterine brothers jointly, but remained the property of the (p.112) sub-clan as a whole, and at any subsequent data readjustments could be made by the adult male members of the sub-clan in council together.

The fact that an estate had been divided in this way among members of the sub-clan did not give any of those members the right to sell even part of the portion they controlled. Such sales could be effected only by agreement of the sub-clan as a whole. However, when a man had been allocated a portion of an estate by his father during his father's lifetime (provided always that his father was the sole owner and had the legal right to do so), then that portion of the estate became, as already stated, the absolute property of the man to whom it was so awarded. He could do what he liked with the whole or any portion of it during his lifetime. After his death, it would pass to his sons and become sub-clan land, the sub-clan in this case being his own male descendants. In fact, such a man would become the founder of a new sub-clan, just as a man who bought a piece of land from a Kikuyu or a Ndorobo became the founder of a new sub-clan.

When the members of a sub-clan decided to subdivide the estate among the eldest sons of the family, for them to control but not own, boundaries were marked out, but the only plants that could be used for this were *mũkũngũgũ* and *mũũũ***.** In no circumstances could plants of the type used for main boundaries between one estate and another be used for subdividing an estate among members of a single family.

Circumstances in which a Portion or the Whole of an Estate (*Gĩthaka*) *could be Sold after it had become Sub-clan Land*

After an estate had become the property of a family or sub-clan there were still certain circumstances in which the whole or a portion of it could be sold to some other family or individual.

If a member of the sub-clan committed murder, manslaughter, or another offence for which the members as a whole were liable to a heavy fine (see Chapter 23), which they had not the means to pay, the sub-clan's elders might meet in council and agree to offer a portion of their land for sale, so that the payment could be made.

If they did so, the purchaser had to ratify the contract exactly as in any other outright sale, and the boundaries of the portion so sold were marked off with crinum lily plants. This portion was then irrevocably excised from the original estate.

If one member of the sub-clan was in urgent need of stock, and could (p.113) raise what he needed by any other means, he could approach the other members of the sub-clan and ask for their permission to sell his share of the land. If the other members were sufficiently well off to provide the stock he needed among themselves, and if they were disposed to do so, they would refuse to allow the sale to take place, and instead would provide their indigent brother with what he needed.

If, on the other hand, they could not, or would not, help him, then they could authorise him to sell his own share of the land, or a portion of it, after they had agreed as to what his portion actually was. If he sold the whole of his share, then he forfeited all further rights in the remaining land. If he sold only a portion of his share, he retained his ordinary cultivation rights over the remaining part of his share, and also general rights in the sub-clan land as a whole.

As we shall see in Chapter 19, all male members of a family had a customary obligation to help other male members raise the stock necessary for the marriage of a first wife. If a member of a sub-clan did not receive help in accordance with this custom, he could announce that he intended to sell a portion of the sub-clan estate instead, in order that he might marry. In such circumstances he would not have to consult the other male members. It would be enough to announce his plans and start negotiations. Then, if the other members did not want him to dispose of a portion of their joint estate in order to marry, they would hasten to raise the necessary stock for his marriage payments. If, however, the man persisted in trying to negotiate the sale, after such help had been given, and without the consent of the joint owners, they could take legal action against him.

Remedies against the Over-Population of an Estate (***Gĩthaka***)

The number of people which any estate could support was clearly limited. Therefore, as the numbers increased it soon became incapable of supporting all the members of the family. When congestion became severe, members of the sub-clan would find it more and more difficult to make a living, and some would decide to move. In many cases the wealthiest sections of the sub-clan would move first, since it was the ambition of every Kikuyu to found a sub-clan of his own.

Any members who found that he could afford to do so, usually started to enquire about land that was for sale, and as soon as he found a suitable area, initiated negotiations. Having bought the land, and (p.114) moved on to it, he would take with him a few of the poorer families of his sub-clan to help him in the clearing of forest and in defence. In return for the advantages of having good grazing and the chance to grow crops on virgin soil, such people would be glad to accompany him.

When a member of a landowning sub-clan moved on to new land, he did not relinquish his rights as a joint holder of the original family estate. But in practice it was very hard for him to come back if the population on the sub-clan land was dense, for, as soon as he moved and relinquished his cultivation rights, the trustee and the council would allocate the area so relinquished to some of the other members of the family. If and when the man who had moved away came back and claimed his rights to cultivate, his claim would be accepted as valid, but he would have to be content with whatever uncultivated area might be available at the time of his return.

Besides the rich members of a sub-clan who moved from the land when it was overcrowded, and bought forest land for themselves, there were always some members who were prepared to move away and become tenants (*athami* or *ahoi*) of rich men elsewhere.

Men who were poor and who went off to become tenants on the estates of wealthy men did so in the hope that they would be able, gradually, to acquire sufficient wealth to buy land and become the founders of a sub-clan themselves. To become a tenant on one of the big estates was regarded as one of the best stepping stones to ultimate wealth, and the chance of founding a sub-clan of one's own.

In addition to the purely economic reasons mentioned above, there were two other important factors which occasionally led members of a landowning sub-clan to leave the estate of which they were part owners and go off to become tenants on the estate of some other family.

From time to time a man and his immediate family would become victims of a series of misfortunes, such as a number of inexplicable deaths, or severe stock diseases. In such circumstances, a man would consult a diviner and, very often, be told that his troubles were due to the fact that the land on which he was living was, for one reason or another, unfavourable to him, and he would be well advised to move. Any man who received such a verdict from a diviner would usually start to look around for somewhere to go as a tenant, thus to put an end to the series of misfortunes from which he was suffering and make a fresh start.

Occasionally, too, a member of a landowning sub-clan would find himself continuously at variance with his fellow owners of the joint estate, and eventually life would become so unbearable that he would decide to move away.

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In any of the above four cases, when a man decided to move away from the land of his own family and go elsewhere as a tenant, it was customary for all the male members of the family to meet at a beer party and give the man their formal blessing, so that they should separate under favourable auspices. If this was not done and the man were to leave unblessed, he might later put a curse on his relatives and bring disaster upon them. Similarly, they might, by their ill wishes, prevent him having success in his new venture.

Law and Custom concerning a Resident Tenant (***Muthami***)

A *mũthami* was a man who arranged with a landowner to become his resident tenant. The word *mũthami* is derived from the stem "-*thama*" (to move house), and means one who moves his whole homestead and takes up residence elsewhere.

When a man wished to become a resident tenant, he made enquiries to find a landowner who wanted tenants, and having heard of one or two such men, he would go as a casual visitor to look at the land and see whether it was the sort of place that would suit him. If it was, he then approached the owner of the land, stated his case, and asked if he could come and be his resident tenant. If the landowner agreed, he would say to his visitor, "Go and bring your wife or wives, your children, your flocks, and your household property, and I will give you a place to build your homestead and land to cultivate". The man then returned home, made all his preparations for the move, and set off with all his possessions till he came to the boundary of the man who was to be his landlord.

When he arrived at the boundary, he had to halt and send a messenger to the landowner, saying, "Go and tell so-and-so I have come, and bid him come and meet me" (*'Thiĩ uuge ndĩ mũũku na atĩ nĩndũngwo'*). The landowner would then collect one or two council elders and come with them to the place where the prospective tenant halted.

As soon as the landowner arrived, the prospective tenant had to kill a ram or a ewe, which was called *mbũri ya ndarũa* (a ram for a sleeping mat). This was slaughtered and eaten by the landowner and his friends, together with the prospective tenant. The landowner then took the stomach contents of the animal (*taatha*) and spread it across the path where it crossed the boundary on to his land, so that every member of (p.116) the tenant's party would tread in it as he entered the land which was to become his new home.

Having entered the estate of their landlord, the latter pointed out a place where the newcomers might build temporary shelters for the night. On the next morning he came with a number of men and women of his own family, and, having given the tenant a site upon which to erect his homestead, he and his friends helped him build it.

Once the new homestead was built and fenced, the new tenant brewed beer and summoned his landlord to come and drink it. This beer served the double purpose of entertaining the landlord and of completing the ceremonies connected with putting up the homestead; it was called *njohi ya kũrugũria mũciĩ* (beer for the house-warming of the homestead. See Chapter 5).

The tenant and his family were next shown land which they might cultivate. No further ceremony took place until the tenant reaped his first harvest. Then the landowner came and demanded the fee of a goat from the tenant, called *mbũri ya mathangũ* (literally, 'a goat for the leaves'). This was a fee to pay for the right of grazing his goats and sheep on the land, but it was not paid until after the first harvest, so as to allow the tenant time to see if he liked the place and was really going to settle down.

The obligations of the tenant to the landlord in the way of special fees were now over, but whenever the tenant brewed beer for any purpose, or when he had a special feast, he had to invite his landlord to come and share in it.

Before the new tenant could really settle down to normal life in his new environment, he had still two more fees to pay; not, however, to the landlord, but to the council elders (excluding the landlord) of the area where the estate was situated. These fees were demanded and had to be paid before the new tenant could himself become a member of the local council of elders, and before he could claim any of the recognised privileges of a council elder. The first of the two fees was called *mbũri ya gĩikaro* (the goat for settling down), and the second was called *mbũri ya rũtere* (the sheep for the border land). These were payable because the man had come to be a resident in the border lands, where the soil was unspoiled by over-cultivation, and where he could hope to harvest excellent crops.

The status of such a man (*mũthami*) was that of a tenant who paid no rent in the European sense of the word. But in return for permission to reside on the land, cultivate crops, and herd his stock there, he became a member of the community of which the landowner's family was the nucleus, and he put his own services and those of his grown-up (p.117) sons at the disposal of the community for defence purposes, an important thing in the days of Maasai raids.

The only actual fees which a resident tenant paid subsequently were "first fruits". At every harvest the first full *kĩondo* (string bag) of each crop had to be sent as tribute to the landlord, and failure to pay would result in eviction.

Once he had been accepted, a resident tenant had reasonable security of tenure, because he could be evicted only if he and his family were guilty of serious offences, or if the land was actually needed by the landowner or members of his own family. Moreover, if he was to be evicted he had to be given ample notice and be allowed to reap all his standing crops.

It was the aim of every resident tenant to consolidate his position by forming a marriage alliance between a member of his family and that of the landowning family, and so change his status to that of a relative-in-law (*mũthoni*). A resident tenant usually also hoped that he would, in due course, become wealthy enough to be able to purchase an estate for himself, and so become a landowner in his own right.

A Mũhoi (*Tenant-at-will*)

The term *mũhoi* is derived from the stem "*-hoya*" (to ask for), and denotes a man who asks for permission to cultivate on someone else's land, but who does not normally go and live there.

For instance, a man who was a member of a landowning family might have a well established homestead of his own and not wish to move away, but at the same time, he might be suffering from a shortage of arable land on the family estate. In such circumstances, he would approach some friend or acquaintance who was the owner, or joint owner, of a large, newly acquired estate as yet undeveloped, and ask for permission to have an area of the new land to clear and cultivate.

The formal application for such cultivation rights had to be made at a ceremonial beer drink. The would-be tenant (*mũhoi*) would brew beer, invite the man on whose land he wanted cultivation rights, and make formal request before the beer drinking started. Normally, a man who had plenty of land to spare was quite willing to take on a number of *ahoi* and grant them cultivation rights, for although no set fees were payable, and no rent, every *mũhoi* had to present a portion of the crop to his landlord at each harvest. He was also liable to be called upon, from time to time, to contribute a goat or sheep to his landlord (p.118) if and when the landlord was in need for any purpose, such as marriage payments for members of his family, or payment of fines.

If a *mũhoi* refused to make such a contribution on demand, without reasonable excuse, he would render himself liable to eviction. Not infrequently, a man who was a *mũhoi* would, at a later date, ask to change his status and become a resident tenant (*mũthami*).

It is important to note that no resident tenant (*mũthami*) or tenant-it-will (*mũhoi*) was ever given any ownership rights over the land which he cultivated. Such tenants were merely given cultivation rights, and, in the case of a resident tenant, the right to build a homestead as well.

The crops cultivated by a tenant-at-will or by a resident tenant were the property of that man, but the land itself was never his. A cultivated area was called a *mũgũnda*, and the tenant was described as the owner of the cultivated area (*mwene mũgũnda*), but it was clearly understood that the *mũgũnda* rights did not include ownership of the land.

In no circumstances could either a tenant-at-will or a resident tenant transfer his cultivation rights to anyone else, except his own sons, daughters, or wives. The grant of cultivation rights was made to a man and was intended to include his immediate family, but if he wished to relinquish them, he could only give them back to the landowner.

In the case of an estate which had ceased to be the property of one man, or of a man and his brothers, and which on their death had become sub-clan land, any male member of the sub-clan had the potential right to allot cultivation rights to a tenant, provided always that he only did so with the consent of the trustee, or, in the event of his wishing to have a number of such tenants, after consultation with al1 the sub-clan elders in council.

A Relation-in-law (*Mũthoni*)

We have already mentioned one type of *mũthoni* (relation-in-law) in connection with land tenure, namely, the man who bought a portion of an estate from the owner and who became by that act his relation-in-law, in a non-literal sense.

There was, however, a second type of *mũthoni* in connection with the land tenure, and that was a real relation-in-law by marriage between member of the family of the landowner and a member of

the tenant's family. Every resident tenant hoped for a chance to effect a marriage (p.119) alliance with the family of the landlord, and so become a *mũthoni* of the second type.

Whereas a landlord could often find, or even invent, a reason for evicting a *mũthami* or a *mũhoi*, he would not evict a *mũthoni*, who was an actual relative by marriage, except for very serious causes indeed. He would certainly hesitate a long time before taking such action, as it would cause ill feeling between the two related families.

Eviction of a Tenant

We must now examine the accepted causes of eviction and the method whereby an eviction was enforced. This varied according to circumstances.

If a landowner considered any tenant to be behaving in an unsatisfactory way, either in his relations with the landlord or in his relations with the other tenants of the estate, he would send for the man and inform him that he wished him to leave. The landlord would have to specify the reasons for such action; the commonest grounds for an eviction of this type were: 1. *ukarĩ*—failure to observe recognised standards of hospitality; for example, stinginess in the amount of beer provided as residence fee (*mũraaro*) for the elders at any beer drink, or secretiveness about meat feasts so as to avoid having too many uninvited guests. 2. *ũremi*—unwillingness to obey the instructions and orders of the landowning family and unwillingness to give the recognised assistance that was due to them in connection with such matters as building, repairing, and maintaining the fortifications of the village. 3. *ũtũrĩka*—being a disturber of the peace or using insulting language towards the landlord, and general misbehaviour. 4. *ũrogi*—being suspected of dealing in witchcraft.

On being charged with any of these offences, the tenant could plead with the landowner for forgiveness, and usually, in the case of a first offence, the landowner would withdraw his charge but demand a forfeit of two *ngoima* (stall-fattened animals). These were paid to the council elders of the village.

If the accusation was of witchcraft (*ũrogi*), the accused man would also have to provide a ram for the ceremony of swearing on oath (*kũnyua muuma*) that the accusation was false.

If a man offended his landlord again, he would not be forgiven, but told firmly that he had to start making arrangements to move at once. He could harvest his standing seasonal crops, but he might not do (p.120) any further planting. Such permanent or semi-permanent crops as bananas and sugar-cane could be harvested (but not tended) for a year or two after eviction, or until they ceased to yield through lack of attention. The landowner, however, could take them over at fair valuation, fixed by independent council elders.

If a landowner had no real grievance against a tenant, but wished to evict him because he needed the land for his own use, or for some member of his family, he could evict the tenant only by acting in the following way: instead of summoning the tenant and accusing him of some offence, he would simply go to one of the cultivated plots of the tenant and insert branches of a shrub or tree with green leaves on them (*ithĩgĩ*) at various points on the plot. This was a sign to the tenant that he was not to undertake further planting, and only to harvest his standing crops.

In some cases, a landlord would place such branches over only a portion of the cultivated area of a tenant. This would mean that he was evicted from those portions, but that he could retain his cultivation rights over the remaining part of the area.

If a tenant behaved in any criminal way, or if he refused to leave after he had been given notice of eviction, then the landlord was entitled to call together all the other tenants, and with their help forcibly evict the man, taking all his crops for themselves and driving him, his flocks, and his family, off the land.

Safeguard against Unreasonable Eviction

In order to safeguard tenants against unreasonable eviction, and especially to prevent a landowner from evicting a tenant after he had cleared and cultivated a piece of land, in order that he might benefit from it himself, Kikuyu land laws provided that the cultivated land from which a tenant had been evicted had to be allowed to lie fallow and revert to bush once more before it could be used for cultivation by the landowner. The landlord might not benefit from his ex-tenant's labours.

Rights of Tenants and certain Restrictions

Every tenant, whether resident or tenant-at-will, had an unrestricted right to cultivate the whole or a portion of the area allotted to him, (p.121) and to plant whatever crops on it he wished. Each also had the right to graze his flock on such portions of the estate as were set aside by the landlord for the general grazing. No tenant, however, could fell any tree for making stools, beehives, or for building materials, without the express consent of the owner of the land. Even if there were trees standing in the area allotted to the tenant for cultivation, he had to leave them standing and cultivate round them unless he obtained special permission to fell them.

The cultivation rights of a tenant expired with his death, and if his family wished to remain as tenants they had to approach the land-owner and make a new agreement with him.

And tenant had the right to ask for an extension of the land he had been allowed to cultivate, and all such requests were normally granted, if they were reasonable, and provided there was land to spare.

If a landowner decided for any reason to sell the whole, or a portion of his estate, in accordance with the rules and methods of sale already described, he was not debarred from doing so by the fact that there were tenants with cultivation rights on that land. He could, in fact, sell land which was under cultivation by tenants without even telling them; once the land was sold, the tenants either had to come to a fresh agreement with the new owner, or else leave as soon as they had harvested their standing crops.

When a new landlord purchased a part of any estate upon which tenants of a previous owner were living, or had cultivation rights, he had certain special privileges on the actual day upon which he entered into possession of his new land. He could, for example, choose a site for his new homestead on land that was actually under cultivation, and might cut down or trample on the crops growing there, without being held responsible for damages. Furthermore, on that day he could let his flocks graze on the crops in any field or garden belonging to any tenant. The new owner was allowed these special privileges on the first day as a token of the fact that he was now the owner. Thereafter, until the tenants of the former owner had reaped their crops and moved, he had to respect their rights. If he infringed them, he would be liable by law.

Normally, as soon as a would-be owner started negotiations with the landlord for the purchase of land that was already under cultivation, the tenants would take steps to obtain permission from him to remain as his tenants. The result of such negotiations would, of course, depend upon the amount of land that the new owner wanted to keep (p.122) for his own. In the event of the new owner deciding to evict the tenants of the previous owner, he had to allow them reasonable time

to harvest their standing seasonal crops, and he had to take over, at fair valuation, their non-seasonal crops, such as banana trees, yams, and sugar-cane. Otherwise he had to allow their cultivated areas to revert to bush, without utilising any of their produce.

The Responsibilities and Rights of a Landowner

In the case of an estate whose purchaser himself was still alive, all the rights and responsibilities described below were vested in him. In the case of land that had passed by inheritance to his descendants, these same rights were vested in the male members of the family or sub-clan as a whole, but in such cases the sub-clan elders usually vested these rights in one of their number, whom they appointed as trustee.

By Kikuyu law and custom, ownership of land also gave the owner full rights in respect of all water, grazing, timber, and minerals, subject to certain special laws and restrictions.

Water Supply

Any springs which were actually situated on an estate were the property of the owner, and he could make rules prohibiting the watering of cattle and sheep at any spring. He could not, however, prevent any other Kikuyu, whether resident on that estate or not, from drawing water for domestic purposes from any spring or well. If he attempted to do so he would immediately be suspected of being a worker in witchcraft (*mũrogi*), and could be put to death by the tribe.

Rivers and streams rising elsewhere and flowing through any estate ranked as the common property of the tribe. No one could prevent any cattle or sheep from drinking the water of any flowing stream or river, provided that such cattle or sheep did not trample upon crops in the process. Moreover, every landowner was responsible for seeing that reasonable access to all streams and rivers was available to the tenants on his land, so that flocks could go to water without destroying crops.

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Timber

By Kikuyu law and custom the purchase of land included the timber growing on that land. In recognition of this fact, land which had utility timbers growing on it was usually sold for an enhanced price.

In the case of the sale of land that had been cleared of forest, and on which comparatively few large trees were left standing, their value would be assessed separately and then added to the purchase price.

The Kikuyu valued large timber trees greatly for hut building and stockade requirements, as well as for the making of beehives and many wooden articles for household use, and the residual wood of such trees was used for fuel. Because of this, Kikuyu law provided for the formation of what would now be called forest reserves.

Owners of large stretches of land had the absolute right to prohibit all felling of trees in certain areas, either for fuel or for any other purpose. This was so in order to create timber reserves which could be used at a later date, when the forests had been pushed further back in the course of clearing for cultivation. Then, when other timber was less accessible, the owner of the forest reserve, or the family trustee if the original owner was dead, could permit restricted cutting of timber at his absolute discretion.

An estate owner also had the right to maintain a patch of dense forest all round the area chosen for an ordinary village (*itũũra*) well inside Kikuyu country, as well as one chosen for the building of a fortified village (*kĩhingo*) near the border.

When the natural expansion of the Kikuyu tribe had carried the boundaries further and left what had once been a border village as a village well inside the boundary, then the forest that had been reserved as a defence round the village was often turned into a "timber reserve", in which felling was permitted only by special authority.

Another reason for the prohibition of forest felling was the desire of some landowners to retain forest land for the use of their descendants. For this reason a man who had bought a large area of forest sometimes left a deathbed curse prohibiting any of his descendants from ever bringing tenants on to the estate. This meant, of course, that much more of the forest land could be left undisturbed.

Among forest patches which were preserved by the Kikuyu by means of definite curses before 1900, and which are still at least partly virgin forest today, may be mentioned the Karura Forest Reserve lying between Nairobi and Kiambu, and the Nairobi City Park. The (p.124) former was made into a forest reserve by four landowners jointly, their names being Tharũga, Gaciĩ, Wang'endo, and Hinga. The City Park was originally preserved by a man whose name was Kĩrongo, and who, by his own wish, was buried there when he died.

In spite of all these restrictions, any person living on an estate could cut down small, unimportant trees for firewood, without special permission, provided that he (or she) did not touch timber trees or other valuable trees, or cut anything in a reserved area. Trees such as the loofah sausage tree (*mũratina*), whose fruit was used in beer brewing, were the absolute property of the landowner, and their fruit could not be harvested by anyone but himself.

Grazing

Persons who were resident on an estate (whether members of the land-owning family or of the families of the tenants) were allowed to graze their flocks on any uncultivated land of the estate provided it was not land which the owner or the trustee had closed to grazing.

The landowner, or the trustee, could not graze his own stock on any portion of the estate which was closed for grazing to the stock of his tenants. Grazing was regarded as communal, although the land grazed over was not. The land remained the owners', and they could at any time take grazing land and cultivate it themselves, or allocate it to tenants for cultivation. No one, however, who had only grazing rights, could claim to be allowed to cultivate grazing land simply because he was allowed to graze his flocks there.

To close any area from all grazing in order to rest it, the owner had to hang up bunches of dry banana leaves (*matharara*) at intervals round it. No one but the landowner or the trustee had the right to do this. On the other hand, any cultivation owner, whether a tenant or a member of the landowning family, could prevent grazing over an area which had been under his cultivation and which he wished to allow to fallow for one or two planting seasons.

Minerals

Landowners had absolute rights over all minerals, with the exception of saline earth (*mũũnyũ*), which was used by cattle and sheep as a salt lick.

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The other minerals used by the Kikuyu for economic purposes were murram (*mũthanga*) which contained iron ore, and potters' clay (*rĩũmba*).

Iron smelters who wished to mine murram were allowed to do so without charge, but they had to send a gift of pig iron, derived from ore, to the landowner. Women who dug potters' clay were also allowed to take it without a fee, but they were expected to present pots to the landowner from time to time.

Salt licks, although surrounded on all sides by privately owned were always regarded as tribal property. All landowners had to give right of access to any cattle passing through on the way to salt licks and these paths, used by cattle and other stock going to and from the salt licks, were called *njĩra cia mũũnyũ* (roads to the salt licks). No one could close them.

Some of the larger and better known salt licks, such as that known as Thathi-inĩ, near Kiambu, were at times even made available to Maasai cattle by special treaties (see Chapter 24).

It was the duty of the warriors resident in the area round any salt lick to defend all the cattle using it, since the Maasai were always tempted to raid large herds congregated at such a place, but people from other areas were supposed to help them. Warriors resident in the area of a salt lick could temporarily close the roads of access if the warriors of other areas using the lick were not taking their share of the responsibility for protection.

Place for the Disposal of Dead Bodies

The owners or trustees of every estate were responsible for the selection and setting aside of an area of land as a place where dead bodies were to be disposed of (*kĩbĩrĩra*), if they were people whose status did not justify their burial (see Chapter 22). Such an area was not fenced and marked off in any particular way, but the landowner showed the position to all council elders resident on the estate, and they were responsible for making sure that their families knew the exact position and did not infringe upon it by cutting the bush, or allowing cattle to graze there. From time to time the site of the *kĩbĩrĩra* could be changed, and when a new one had been set aside, the old one could be allocated for cultivation. The first cultivators of an area that had been used in this way had to be newly arrived tenants, not people whose families had ever disposed of their own dead there.

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Dancing Grounds

On every large estate it was considered necessary to have a grassy field (*kĩhaaro*) which could be used for any ceremonies, including dances which required the attendance of a large number of people. The choice of the field was dictated by the lie of the land, for it had to be relatively flat ground, and not swampy.

The selection of the field had to have the sanction of the landowner and he had the right, if he wished, to insist on closing it later and choosing another site instead.

Public Footpaths

The whole of Kikuyu country was linked by a series of public footpaths or "travellers' ways" (*njĩra cia agendi*). From these main paths radiated smaller paths leading to homesteads and villages. No landowner could close a public footpath, although he could, if he wished, alter the line it took across his land if the existing one interfered with his development plans.

Land Transferred Temporarily as Security for a Loan

Apart from the outright sale of land, the Kikuyu living south of the Chania included in their land laws provision for the mortgage of a piece of land in order to raise a loan.

If a man was in urgent need of goats, sheep, or cattle, and found that the members of his own family who would normally help him to raise these were too poor to do so, he could obtain a loan from some rich man belonging to another family. He would then, with the consent of the other members of his family, transfer a portion of family land as security. The land so handed over was not marked out with boundary marks and it did not become the absolute property of the man who took it as security, but there were certain rules governing such a transaction which had to be observed.

If the man who accepted a piece of land as security for a loan, cultivated and developed that land while it was in his possession, and (p.127) and reaped crops from it, then, when the loan was repaid and the land handed back to the original owner (or his legal representatives), the borrower would only have to pay back the actual number of animals borrowed without any accrued interest. That is to say, the borrower might keep any progeny of the borrowed animals as his own, since the man who made the loan had had the benefit of the profits from the land given to him as security, in the form of the crops that he had reaped on it.

If the man who took the land as security held it without developing it in any way, and without reaping any crops from it, or getting any other profit from holding it, then when the loan was repaid, the original number of animals borrowed had to be returned, with a further number equal to their computed offspring during the time they had been in the borrower's possession.

As a result of these rules, if a man gave a piece of land as security for a loan and found that the man who took it over was not cultivating it he would get his family to help him redeem it as soon as possible. Otherwise the interest on the loan, in the form of computed offspring, would within a few years reach alarming proportions.

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Introduction

In the Kikuyu country south of the Chania River, the planning of villages depended upon the position of those villages in relation to the Kikuyu-Maasai and Kikuyu-Kamba boundaries.

Any village that was located on the outer fringes of Kikuyu territory anywhere up to three or four miles from the border, was organised as a fort, or fortified village (*kĩhingo*—literally, something that shuts or barricades). Villages that were farther from the border were not fortified in the same way, because there was no need for this. Villages in the interior were made up of a collection of homesteads, each of which was surrounded by a double fence, but the whole village (*itũũra*) was not enclosed and pallisaded in the way that the border villages were.

Every fortified village and every ordinary village in the interior was made up of a number of homesteads, each of which comprised anything from two to 30 or 40 huts, according to the status of its owner. We will first consider the arrangement and planning of a fortified village in the border territories, and then that of a village in the interior. The layout of a homestead (*mũciĩ*), which was the same in both cases, will be discussed last.

Building a Fortified Village (*Kĩhingo*)

When a family bought a new estate from the Wandorobo, the first thing that they did, if that estate was in the border areas, was to prepare a suitable place for their fortified village. A site was selected where the ground was reasonably level, at or near the top of a ridge, and here the forest and virgin bush was cleared over a fairly wide area, but the larger trees were left standing, as well as patches of undergrowth. The trees all round the area were felled outwards, so as to form a rough fence of tangled branches and tree trunks. Beyond this rough fence the virgin forest and bush was left uncut for a considerable distance, and any subsequent clearings made for cultivation were so arranged (p.129) not to interfere with this belt of bush land. At one point, and one point only, the trees were completely cleared to provide the entrance to the new village.

Across this clearing for the entrance was built a strong palisade of poles. Each pole had a diameter of 6in. or more and each was set into the ground in a hole 2 or 3ft. deep so that the pole was unshakable. Very often poles of these palisades were arranged in a double or even treble line, and in the whole palisade only one entrance was left. This was narrow, so narrow in fact that only one person could pass through it at a time. The palisade was known as *rũgiri rũa kĩhingo*.

The trees chiefly used for the poles of the palisade were *mũtamaiyũ*, *mũhũgũ*, *mũtendera*, *mũirũthi*, *mũcarage*, *mũkinyai*, and *mũnderendũ*. These were all hard, long lasting woods, not likely to rot and thus render the palisade weak.

Outside this palisade on either side of the entrance were dug deep pits similar to those used for trapping buffalo. These pits were fitted with sharpened stakes, both at the bottom and projecting inwards at an angle from the sides, and were then covered over with lathes and brushwood. Any enemy attempting to attack the palisade would run a grave risk of falling into one of the covered pits, and being killed by the stakes.

Leading outwards from the gap in the palisade was the main path to and from the village, on either side of which the bush and forest was left uncut. This path was guarded by a built-up fence, along which there were gateways at intervals, so that in some cases there were three gateways to pass through before the main entrance. At nightfall, as soon as every member of the village had returned home, each of these gateways was closed, and after that, until next morning, no one was permitted to open the gates and go in or out. Even if some belated member of the village arrived after the closing of the gates and called out to have them opened, they would not be opened, because there

was always a fear lest such a person might be acting as a spy for the enemy, and be trying to get the gates opened in order to let in attackers. Any genuine member of the village would know of the secret ways into the village, through the fence made of felled trees, and could enter this way if necessary. These secret entrances, however, were such that no one could enter without being heard.

Just inside the main entrance in the palisade was the area known as *boi*, in which were built shelters known as *itayaya*. Here every night a number of warriors slept on guard, and as every woman or girl came back into the village in the evening with field produce she had to leave a sweet potato, some bananas, or a yam as a contribution to the supper of the warriors who were on guard that night.

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As soon as dusk approached, the warriors who were going on guard lit a big fire by the shelters, and they noted all the people as they came in so that they could close the gates as soon as everyone who was coming home that night appeared to have entered. Sometimes, across the pathway just outside the main entrance to the palisade, there was a deep pit staked with sharp stakes. Over this pit a bridge was fixed by day, made from a big hurdle-work hut door (*riigĩ*). This bridge over the pit would be removed at night leaving the pit open, so that if people tried to rush the entrance they would fall in and be killed.

The fence made from felled trees which surrounded the village area was known as *ngando*, and once it had been felled and left a little time it would become overgrown with a creeper known as *mũtanda-mbogo* or *mũthagurũ*. This creeping, thorny plant, combined with the felled trees, made a barrier that no one could pass unless they knew the secret passages through it.

The existence of these passages was a necessity, because if ever the Maasai did attack the stronghold, the women, children, and old men within the village would be sent out through the secret passages to hide in the bush beyond, in case the attackers succeeded in forcing an entrance. The trees most favoured in forming the fence of felled trees were *mũyuyu* and *mũkawa***.** Both of these thorn bearing trees were felled, in such a way that they toppled without separating from their roots, so that they would go on growing in their fallen position and so make a growing thorn fence. This, combined with the thorny creeper *mũtanda-mbogo*, was practically impenetrable.

Building a Village in the Interior (***Itũũra***)

In the interior the Kikuyu did not construct villages in the way described above, but here, too, the homesteads of a number of people were built fairly close together so as to form a rather rambling sort of village called *itũũra*. Usually this village was fenced about with a thorn fence of *matũra*, beyond which was the bush land separating the village from the cultivated land. If at the site chosen for the village there was not sufficiently dense bush beyond the thorn fence, its density would be increased by planting *muutĩ*, which quickly formed a dense bush.

Each village had one main pathway leading to it and one main entrance, which was provided with a gateway and palisade, also (p.131) called *kĩhingo*. The palisade, however, was not strongly built and was not reinforced with staked pits, because in the interior the danger from the Maasai was not so great. Even if a raiding party managed to penetrate so far they would not be able to do so without the alarm being sounded, and there would be ample time to remove stock and population from the homestead before the raiders arrived.

The arrangement of homesteads within the village itself was by no means an orderly one, and there was no specific layout of streets as such. In selecting a site for a homestead within the village, a

man was not guided by any idea of orderly planning, but rather by such factors as the space available, and the divinations of the medicine-man (*mũndũ mũgo*) whom he consulted.

The population of a village was not by any means composed of members of a single sub-clan, although usually a high proportion of the inhabitants were related to each other. Within each village there were always the homesteads of a number of men belonging to sub-clans other than that of the landowners, who had come and settled there as tenants of the sub-clan that owned the estate. But those in control of the village were always drawn from members of the family which owned the land on which the village was built.

If there were several villages on a single big estate, as there often were, the control of each was vested in the senior members of the land-owning family living in that village, but the ultimate control lay with the trustee of the whole estate.

The grouping of individual family homesteads into a village served many purposes. From the social point of view it meant that at night, when the time for dancing and gossiping arrived, people could go from one homestead to another within the village without fear of attack either from enemies or wild beasts. It also increased safety, because each homestead had a number of warriors, and the warriors of a whole village could combine easily and quickly to form a defence force. The village, if it was composed of a large number of homesteads, would also have a big enough population to form its own council of elders to decide disputes, take part in religious and social ceremonies, and advise in all matters concerning the village life. The community of a village was in fact, a definite social unit, held together by the common ties of social duties, mutual help, and mutual defence. As we shall see again and again in this study, it was to other members of the village that individuals and families turned on innumerable occasions in their daily life.

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The Planning of a Homestead (***Mũciĩ***)

As we have seen, each village, whether on the border or in the interior was made up of a number of homesteads called *mĩciĩ* (singular *mũciĩ*) and the head of each homestead was its founder and *pater familias*.

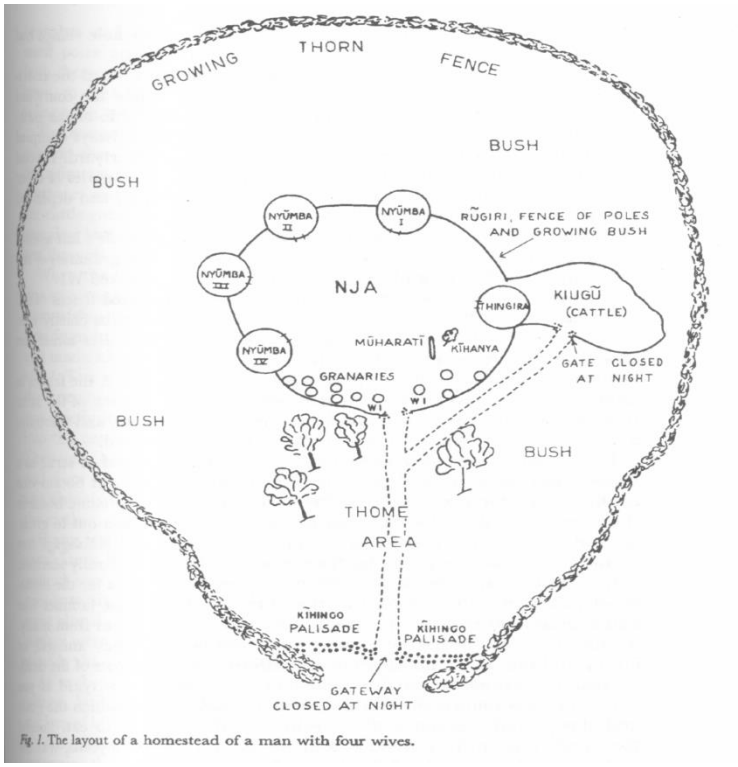

Fig. 1. The layout of a homestead of a man with four wives.

The size of each homestead depended upon the status, wealth, and age of its head. A man who was wealthy and had a number of wives and several grown-up sons and other dependants had a large homestead often running to ten, 15, or more individual huts (a homestead of as many as 40 huts was by no means rare), while a young married man who had recently left his father's homestead and decided to start on his own often had only two or three huts. In our discussion we will take the case of a man who had four wives and a widowed mother dependent upon him, and after describing the arrangements of his homestead, we will turn to the way in which it would expand as time went on and his sons reached marriageable age.

A man wishing to build a homestead selected two or three places that he liked, and then went to a medicine-man to ask which of these was the most favourable. He did not necessarily tell the diviner where the sites were, but took sticks to represent them, and asked the diviner to say which stick represented the most favourable site. The details of the method of divining are dealt with in a later chapter and need not concern us here.

Once the site was chosen, the man proceeded to clear the ground with the help of his friends, and the homestead was built in the form shown in Fig. 1. The position of the *thome* (entrance pathway) depended entirely upon the custom that prevailed in the family to which the man belonged. Some families always had the *thome* facing east, others faced it to the west, others faced it to Mount Kenya or one of the other sacred mountains. Beyond the *thome* area a rough circle was marked out for the courtyard (*nja*), and around this the huts were arranged in the following fixed order. As you stood in the entrance and faced the courtyard, the man's own hut (*thingira*) was to the right centre; straight ahead and facing the entrance was the senior wife's hut, the hut of the wife known as Nyakĩambi. The huts of the second, third, and fourth wives followed round the circle in the order of their precedence, and the gap between each was filled by a fence (*rũgiri*). The arrangement of the huts was always counter-clockwise, with the man's hut (*thingira*) first, the first wife's hut second, and other wives in succession after that.

p.133
Behind the courtyard enclosed by the circle of huts there was normally a fairly extensive area of bush, beyond which was planted a growing hedge of *matũra*. This hedge was also in a rough circle with a gap left in front of the entrance area. At this gap was built a gateway, *kĩhingo*, similar to the gateway of a village, but less solid. It was always (p.134) closed at night, but not until all the activities of the whole village had ceased, and everyone was about to retire for the night.

From this gateway (*kĩhingo kĩa mũciĩ*) a path led toward the courtyard across the entrance area (*thome*), and just inside the courtyard there were invariably two granaries, one on either side of the path. These were the granaries of the first wife, and they always occupied this position on either side of the entrance to the courtyard. Beyond these two granaries on either side were placed the granaries of other wives, but the arrangement of these was not constant, and depended upon the custom of the family concerned.

In Fig. 1 the men's hut is marked *thingira*, the first wife's hut *nyũmba* I, and second wife's *nyũmba* II, etc. The two principal granaries of the first wife on either side of the entrance have been marked Wl.

In the spaces between the huts there were constructed fences called *rũgiri rũa mũciĩ*. These were made of poles, and the shrubs chiefly used were those known as *mũhĩnda-hĩndĩ* and *mũkandu*. The latter sometimes took root and grew into a living hedge.

In the case of homesteads built inside a border village, the fences to separate the huts were of much stronger and stouter poles, of the same trees as those used for the palisade at the main entrance, and there was a second gateway made at the entrance to the courtyard.

In the courtyard a *mũkũngũgũ* tree was always planted to serve as a *kĩhanya*, that is, a "forked post" to which bunches of sweet potato vine could be tied for the goats and sheep to eat when they came home in the evening, and in the morning before they were taken out to graze. In addition to this, there was in some cases a second *mũkũngũgũ* tree planted with due ceremony by the diviner as a place of family sacrifice. This second tree, called *kĩhanya kĩa mũciĩ* (the forked stick for the homestead), was only to be found in the homesteads of those families who had maintained this sacrificial custom, and it was absent from many. At its foot was buried a cooking pot containing honey and oil, or honey and fat, as a kind of perpetual offering to the spirits of the dead.

Near the granaries on the right-hand side of the courtyard as you entered it was placed the wooden trough (*mũharatĩ*) in which .the goats and sheep were regularly given saline earth (*mũũnyũ*) to eat. Behind the men's hut, and between it and the *matũra* hedge beyond, was the cattle enclosure (*kiugũ*). The fence of this enclosure was constructed of stout poles of *mũrigono* and *mũbirũ*, chosen because when dry they break with a loud cracking noise. If any thief or raider, therefore, tried to pull down or climb over this fence at night, some of the (p.135) branches and twigs of these woods would certainly crack and give a clearly audible warning to the owner, for each pole was set up with its smaller branches and twigs left on. In addition, a number of *mũgumo* and *muutĩ* poles and branches were planted round the cattle enclosure. Both these species, when set in the ground as cuttings, took root and grew, so that the fence of dry *mũrigono* and *mũbirũ* was reinforced by living trees and shrubs.

The entrance to the cattle enclosure (*kiugũ*) was not always in the position shown in Fig. 1, although this was the most usual position. Sometimes a man constructed his cattle enclosure without any external entrance, and had access to it only at the back of his own hut, so that his cattle going into the enclosure at night and being driven out in the morning had to pass through his hut, into the courtyard, and thence out through the entrance.

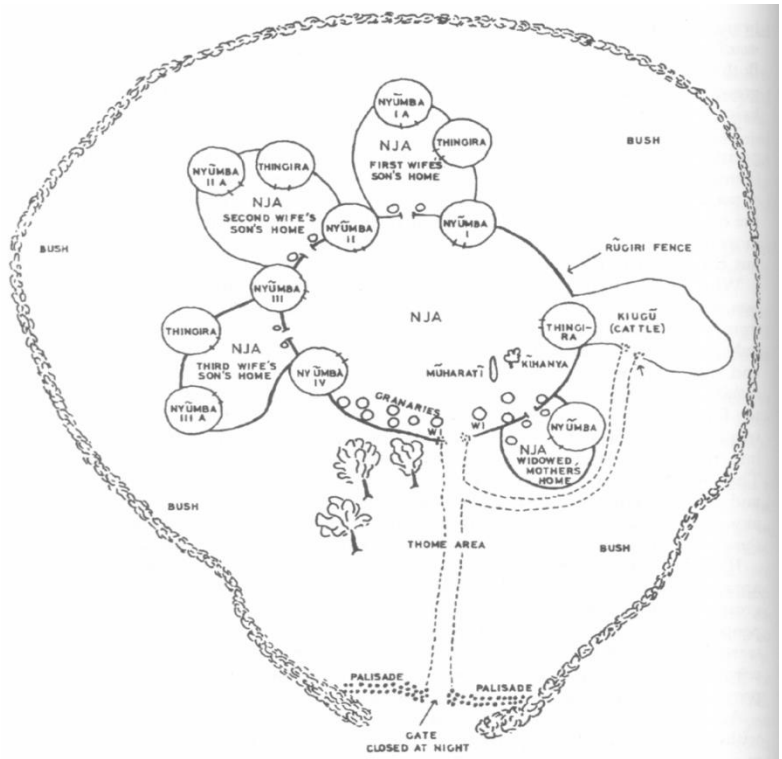

Fig. 2. The layout of a homestead of a man with four wives, a widowed mother and three married sons.

When the entrance to the cattle enclosure was made as shown it was arranged that it could be firmly closed at night. It was closed from within by means of poles, in such a way that it could be opened only from inside. The person closing it shut himself in with the cattle, and made his exit into the courtyard through what was known as the *rũthuĩ*. The *rũthuĩ* was a low entrance to the cattle enclosure made in the fence between the men's hut and his first wife's hut. This entrance was chiefly intended as a passage for the calves when they were taken into the cattle enclosure at the morning and evening milking times. They were housed at night in one or another of the huts of the village and were herded by day with the goats and sheep. In the event of any disturbance among the cattle at night, the warriors would go into the cattle enclosure via this low entrance to see what was wrong.

If any trees giving good shade were growing on either side of the area chosen for the entrance pathway, they were not cut down when the ground was being cleared, but were left to serve as shade trees for the people to sit under in the heat of the day. If no suitable shade trees were already growing, cuttings of such trees as *mũkũngũgũ*, *mũũũ*, and *mũringa* were planted, as they took root easily, grew quickly, and would provide shade within a year or so of being set.

As each son of the family reached warrior status he could, if he wished, build a small hut of his own. This was intended to form the nucleus of his own homestead when the time came for his first marriage. A young man wishing to build a hut of his own in which to sleep and entertain the warriors and maidens of his age-group, would first obtain his father's permission and then make a gap in the fence between his mother's hut and that of the next senior wife. Having made this gap, he would clear the ground behind his mother's hut and place his hut behind her hut, and to the right-hand side of the gap in the fence, when approached from the main courtyard.

p.136
At a later date, when he married his first wife, he would have to build her hut (*nyũmba*) directly opposite the gap and some 20 yards back, so that its position in relation to his own hut (*thingira*) and also to the gap in the fence, would be the same as the arrangements of the main homestead. The granaries of his new wife would be placed (p.137) on either side of the gap in the fence, so that they were on either side of the entrance to his small subsidiary courtyard. In fact, each son, as he built himself a men's hut and a hut for his first wife, reproduced in miniature the plan of the

main homestead, but behind his mother's hut and between it and the main *matũra* hedge. This subsidiary homestead would be fenced in on its own (see Fig. 2).

Normally, as he married more wives, a son went on adding to his subsidiary homestead, until such time as his father died and the homestead was broken up. Then each married son set up a new homestead of his own, moving his existing units to it in the precise order in which they had originally been arranged.

Sometimes, however, a son would decide to move away and set up main homestead of his own soon after he was married, and if he did so, the gap made in the fence was closed again as soon as he had moved elsewhere. If a second son of the same mother married later and also wished to set up his own subsidiary homestead, he would then build his new home in the first son's place. If the first son was still there, however, the younger sons of the same mother could build a little further on. Similarly, the sons of each of the wives of the owner of the main homestead would build their subsidiary homesteads behind their respective mother's huts, and if necessary the growing *matũra* hedge would be cut down and replanted further away to make more room. In the case of a wealthy man with a number of wives, there would often, in his later years, be a large number of subsidiary homestead radiating from the main one.

When a widowed mother came to live under the protection of one of her sons, the same arrangement of huts was repeated. Her hut was built for her between her sons's hut and the entrance to the courtyard, but set a little back (see Fig. 2).

Construction of a Hut

Having examined the general layout of a Kikuyu village and a Kikuyu homestead, we must now examine the procedure of building a hut.

When a man wished to build a new hut, it was customary to call upon friends and relatives to assist him, but he could not do so until he himself had started work on the hut. This was called *kwĩarũkĩra mwako* (to start the building for himself), and until a man had thus initiated the work he had no right to *tũmana* (to call upon his friends to assist him).

p.138
There seems to have been a dual reason underlying this rule. In the first place, by starting the work himself a man demonstrated both his willingness and his ability to do the necessary work on his own, and gave proof that he was not incompetent and lazy. In the second place, he was initiating a task that was supposed to be performed in conformance with rigid restrictions, and was voluntarily placing himself under those restrictions. In theory, none of the men assisting in the cutting of building material or in the actual building of a hut might do any of the following things:

1. eat meat that had been sacrificed in connection with a death;
2. touch honey or honey beer;
3. have intercourse with any of his wives or any other women;
4. eat the meat of an ox, bull, or cow.

By initiating the work himself and getting a part of the task completed before he called in help, he was reducing the number of days that would be necessary for the fulfilment of the work, and therefore when he did call in the help of his friends they would have to endure these restrictions for a much shorter time.

The man who was building the hut, of course, had to observe all these restrictions during the whole period, but those called in by him to help often did not trouble to observe them. Since this was

well known it was customary for the owner of the new hut to take special precautions upon the final day of hut building. These we shall describe presently.

Having initiated the work of cutting down trees and preparing hut poles himself, a man then called in his helpers, and they all set to work to complete it as soon as possible. As the Kikuyu used to build two distinct types of hut, in one of which the walls were made of rough-hewn planks (*mĩhĩrĩgo*), and in the other of brushwood (*rũthwago*), we must consider the methods of building these two hut types separately, and take a hut of the *mĩhĩrĩgo* type first.

Construction of a Hut with Walls made of Rough-hewn Planks (*Mĩhĩrĩgo*)

For these wall planks the trees used most often were *mũhũgũ*, *mũna*, and *mũthaiti*, because they were all easy to split. After felling suitable trees with thick, straight trunks, these trunks were cut into lengths of about six feet, and each length was split up into rough planks about 2in. thick. The task of splitting the trunks into planks was (p.139) accomplished by means of wedges (*ikuĩro*) made from *mũtamaiyũ* and *mũhũgũ* wood.

When the trunks had been split into rough planks, these planks were smoothed down by adzing, or in some cases, by cutting with knives *hiũ cia mengere*. This was called *gũkaha mĩhĩrĩgo*. For a hut of normal size some 60 to 80 such planks were required, whereas a really big hut needed upwards of 100.

The trees which had been felled to provide wood for these planks also yielded posts (*itugĩ*) for supporting the roof. These were obtained from among the branches and thinner parts of the stems. Each of these roof supports had to have a natural fork at one end; if it had not, an artificial fork had to be cut. This process was called *gũcana gĩtugĩ*. The number of roof supports required for a hut varied with the size of the hut and with the ideas of the man who was going to build it, but the most usual number was 16. The arrangement of these supports will be discussed presently and is shown diagrammatically in Figs 3 and 4.

The method of roof construction required that these supports should be of varying length, from about seven to ten feet, but it was usual to cut them all long in the first instance, and subsequently cut off a portion of some of them to get the requisite number of shorter ones.

Of the trees used to supply wood for the planks, only *mũhũgũ* was considered suitable for roof supports, and so the following trees were often cut specially for this purpose: *mũtamaiyũ*, *mũtendera*, and *rũathe*. These three species of timber were seldom used for planks, however, because their wood was difficult to split.

When the requisite number of planks and roof supports had been cut the women of the village were given the job of carrying them from the forest to the site of the new hut, while the men started cutting rafters and cross beams for the roof. One hut required:

1. four *mĩikio* (cross beams or tie-sticks);
2. eight *mĩratho* (primary rafters);
3. an unspecified, but very great number of *mũtĩrĩro* (secondary rafters).

In addition to these there were needed stems of the creepers known as *mũgũkũma* and *mũtanda-mbogo*, or thin branches of *mũyuyu*. These were used for the roof hoops (*mbara*), as described below. The best woods for cross beams were *mũkeũ* or *mũyuyu*. For primary rafters the woods principally used were *mũyuyu*, *mũhethu*, or *mũtũndũ*. For the secondary rafters, any straight saplings were used, for they were not required to be particularly strong.

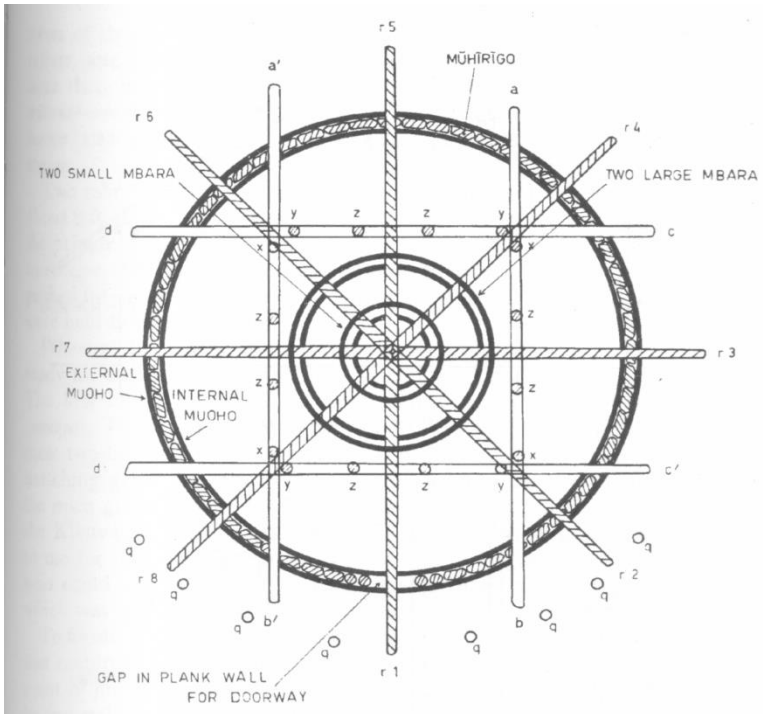

Fig. 3. The method of constructing a hut. x (*Itugĩ*) Short corner roof supports. y (*Itugĩ*) Corner roof supports, 3 in longer than x. z (*Itugĩ*) Main roof supports, longer than x and y. a–b and a′–b′ (*Mũkĩo*) Rafters, put in first. c–d and c′–d′ (*Mũkĩo*) Rafters, put in second. r 1–8 (*Mĩratho*) Main rafters. q Poles to support verandah (*Gĩthaku*) in front of hut.

When all the required building materials indicated above had been (p.140) prepared together with a quantity of the bark from various plants for cord, the actual building work was begun. In hut building, the main part of the work was carried out by men, and while they were setting up the framework the women were busy collecting thatching materials for the roof. A man usually obtained the help of from 10 to 15 men, and with this number a hut could be erected in a single day once the materials had been assembled.

Starting early in the morning, the site selected for the hut was cleared and roughly levelled, and a circle drawn by putting a peg into the middle of the site, attaching a string to it, and using this as a kind of improvised compass. The diameter of the circle varied according to the wishes of the man who was having the hut built, but was seldom less than 15ft. and seldom more than 20ft.

The circle having been demarcated, a trench was dug all along the line of the circle except at one point facing the courtyard. Here a gap of about 24 inches was left for a doorway (*mũromo wa nyũmba*). On either side of this gap the two doorposts had been set in position before the work on the trench was started. This trench was dug to a depth of about 12 inches and was about 6 inches wide, and when it had been completed the roughhewn planks (*mĩhĩrĩgo*) were stood on end in the trench with their edges touching, so as to form the wall of the hut. While some of the working party were setting the wall planks in position, the others were marking out the positions for the roof supports (*itugĩ*).

A square was marked off in the middle of the circle in the position shown in Fig. 3, and two post holes were then dug at each of the four corners of this square. Two more holes were then dug along each side of the square at points equidistant from the corners, or in the case of a very big hut, three holes on each side of the square in addition to the corner poles.

Of the eight posts for the corner holes, four were shorter than the others by about 3in., and these slightly shorter ones were put into the holes marked X in Fig. 3. The slightly taller poles were put into the corner holes marked Y. All the corner poles were only about 12 or 15in. taller than the planks which made the walls.

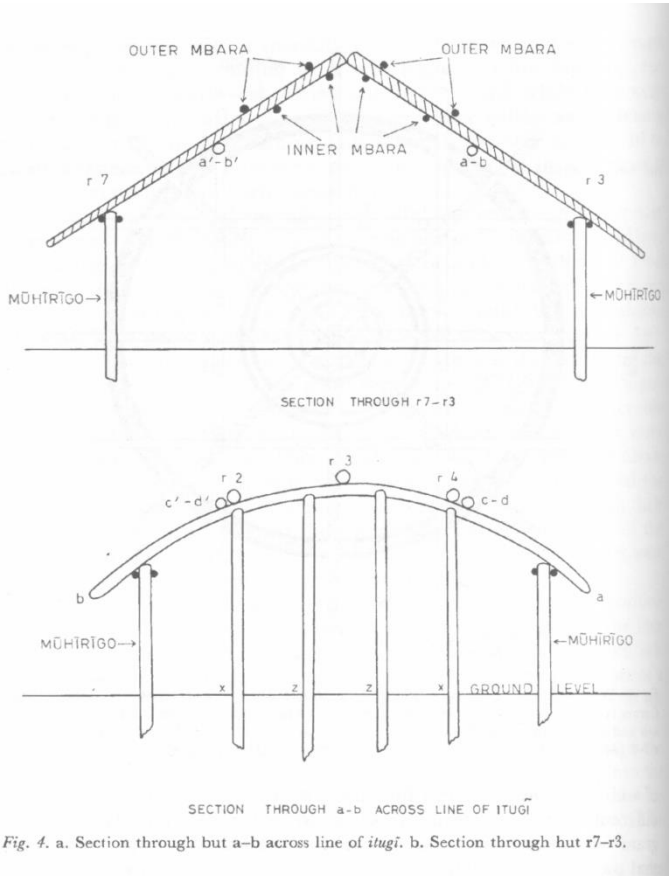

Fig. 4. a. Section through hut a–b across line of *itugĩ*. b. Section through hut r7–r3.

The eight poles for the sides of the square (to be placed in the holes marked Z in Fig. 3) were some 18-24in. taller than the corner posts, and in the case of a big hut which had three poles to each side of the square, the middle one on each side was a little taller than the other two. When these roof supports had been set up, the four cross beams (*mĩikio*) were tied together in the positions marked a-b, a-b', c-d, and c'-d' in Fig. 4.

The arrangement of the roof supports in the form of a square instead (p.141) of a circle within a round hut made it essential that these posts be of different lengths. Since the roof was to be conical, a study of the diagram will show that by arranging the posts in the way described, so that four cross beams formed gentle curves (Fig. 4), this object was achieved very satisfactorily.

When the four cross beams had been duly fixed and tied in the positions indicated, the eight primary rafters (*mĩratho*) were fixed in the positions shown. Each primary rafter was securely tied to the cross beam supporting it, and all of them met in a point exactly above the centre of the hut, while the lower ends rested upon, and projected beyond, the wall planks (*mĩhĩrĩgo*).

p.142
The next task was to fasten creepers (*mĩoho*) of about 1 inch. in diameter (either *mũtanda-mbogo* or *mũgũkũma*) round and round at the top of the planks as a hoop encircling the whole wall outside while a second such hoop was fastened on the inside. These two hoops were then bound together between each wall plank with strong bark so as to hold the whole wall firmly together and prevent splaying. Next, two hoops having a diameter of almost 3ft. were made from thick (p.143) stems of the same creepers; one of these was put over the primary rafters, and the other under them from the inside. These two hoops were then bound together with *mũũgũ wa nyakamwe* creepers. When *mũtanda-mbogo or mũgũkũma* creepers were not available, these roof hoops (*mbara*) were made of *mũnderendu* saplings, but these were not so strong.

Two more much larger hoops were then made, having diameters of about 8ft., and they were similarly fixed farther down on either side of the primary rafters. The main framework of the roof

was now ready to receive the many secondary rafters (*mĩitĩrĩro*). These saplings were pushed into position between the pairs of hoops already mentioned and were held by them.

When all of the secondary rafters were in position the roof was ready for thatching, and this task was carried out entirely by women. The first layers of thatch to be put on were green banana leaves (*macoya*). The second layer was always bracken fern, and on top of these two layers was the grass thatch, or, failing grass, reeds. The best thatching grass was *nyaragĩta*, a grass common on the plains and in the open glades in the forest, but this was not always obtainable, so the Kikuyu commonly planted *kĩgutu* grass in their cultivation areas to use for thatching purposes if they could not get the other. Those who could obtain neither of these grasses used a reed called *ithanjĩ*, which was obtainable in all the swamps.

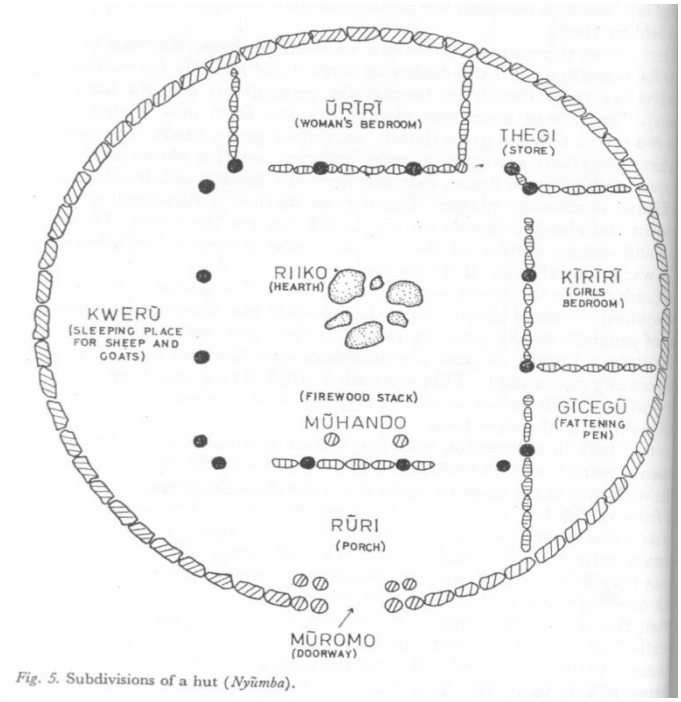

Fig. 5. Subdivisions of a hut (*Nyũmba*).

To finish off the thatching of the apex of the roof a special technique was required. A short sharpened stake (*mũcobe*) was inserted into the point of juncture of the primary rafters at the apex and on this projecting stake a bundle of grass was impaled, with the root ends of the grass pointing downwards. This was called *gĩcĩgĩ*. The grass stems were then bent outwards and downwards radially, and so made a tidy and effective finish to the thatching.

Another task in connection with hut building which was essentially "women's work" was the filling of all the interstices between the planks with cow dung so as to make the walls draught proof.

In front of the hut on either side of the doorway a few short posts (*itugĩ cia gĩthaku*) were set up to support the overhanging primary and secondary rafters, and so make a porch or verandah. This verandah was not carried all round the hut, although, of course, the rafters and thatch overhung the wall all round forming eaves.

When the thatching of the roof and the filling in of the cracks in the walls had been been completed, the main construction work was over, but there remained the partitioning of the interior of the hut, and also the fixing of the door. The door itself was made of hurdle work from (p.144) the stems of the following plants: *mũũgũ wa nyakamwe*, *mũnyatĩ*, and a plant called *rũhurũhuro*. The uprights of the hurdle (*matimũ*) round which the above mentioned creepers were woven were usually made of *mũcũgũcũgũ*, *mũngirima*, or *mũnderendu*. This hurdle work door (*riigĩ*) was fixed by sliding it between the main door posts and two other posts called *hingĩro*.

When the door had been fitted, the next thing, if this was a *nyũmba* or woman's hut, was to make the walls of the woman's bedroom (*ũrĩrĩ*), storeroom (*thegi*), girls' bedroom (*kĩrĩrĩ*), and goat and fattening pen (*gĩcegũ*). The partitions of a men's hut were different (p.145) and will be dealt with separately. The positions of the woman's bedroom and girls' bedroom were fixed by long standing tradition, and are shown in Fig. 5.

The bedroom (*ũrĩrĩ*) of the woman for whom the hut was built had to be at the back of the hut opposite the entrance, and included the whole space behind the roof supports on that side of the central square. The space between these roof supports was closed by a wall of rough hewn planks (*mĩhĩrĩgo*), a space being left as an entrance in the form of a square window at the left-hand end (Plate 2). At either end of the bedroom a lower wall of similar planks was constructed, from the roof supports to the hut wall.

The girls' bedroom (*kĩrĩrĩ*) was built in the same way, but on the right-hand side of the hut with the front wall following the line of the roof supports on the right-hand side of the square.

The head end of the woman's bed had always to be to the right as you entered the hut, and the foot end at the left by the entrance to it. The same applied to the girls' bed.

The floor in both bedrooms was raised about 18 inches by putting in large quantities of twigs and leaves of *mũcatha*, *mũgio*, *ũrutĩ*, and *coco*, and a layer of bracken fern (*rũthirũ*); these formed a springy mattress over the whole floor of the bedroom, and so made it into a bed. Between the leaves and twigs and the layer of bracken fern, it was usual to have a layer of sweepings (*mĩkori*) from the goat and ram fattening pen, consisting of a mixture of sheep and goat dung with sweet potato vine leaves and stems. The purpose of this layer was warmth, for the Kikuyu had found by experience that a layer of *mĩkori* added considerably to the warmth of the bed. Some people used to plaster the top of the braken fern layer with cow dung to give a smooth surface to this mattress, but more often, the oxhide sleeping mat (*ndarũa*) was laid directly on the bracken fern.

In the angle between the head end of the woman's bedroom and the foot end of the girls' bedroom was the storeroom (*thegi*), where the woman of the house kept her pots, gourds, and other household utensils. This had a low enclosing wall and its entrance was at an angle.

By the head end of the girls' bed, in a position corresponding to that of the storeroom in relation to the woman's bed, it was usual to build a special stall for the fattening of rams and he-goats for slaughter. This stall was called the *gĩcegũ*. The floor was usually raised a foot off the ground and consisted of a series of poles supported by short forked sticks. In this way the animals were kept from getting foot rot, for all their dung and urine dropped through the cracks in the poles and could be easily swept out, so that the animals were not continually (p.146) treading in the muck and mire. Some people did not raise the floor of the stall, but they were considered lazy, and the animals often suffered. The space to the left of the square central room was known as the *kwerũ*, and was set aside for the ordinary sheep and goats to sleep in at night.

The whole of the space in the centre of the hut, that is, the square area formed by the 16 roof supports, was known as the *riiko* (kitchen hearth), and in the centre of this the hearthstones were set up (see the figure).

Above the kitchen, or central square room, a platform called *gĩtara* was built by tying cross poles to the eight centre roof props, and then laying a number of other poles across to form a ceiling. This platform served a double purpose; it was a kind of ceiling over the kitchen which prevented sparks from the fire from flying up to the inflammable thatched roof, and it provided an excellent place for drying green firewood before it was transferred to the stack (*mũhando*) where the wood for immediate use was always kept. The wood on the platform was replenished from time to time from the fuel stacks under eaves.

Immediately in front of the doorway a line of planks was set up between the two centre roof supports on that side of the square. This formed a screen, so that anyone entering the hut could not

see straight into the kitchen area. The space between this screen and the doorway was called the *rũri*, and along the inner side of this screen was the stack (*mũhando*) of firewood.

In the centre of the kitchen the hearth was constructed as follows. Three large stones (*mahiga*) were obtained from a rocky outcrop near the river (the stones used for a new hut had to be new ones, and not stones taken from an old hut). Two of these stones were set into holes in the ground and so were immovable, the third was merely placed on the ground, so that its position in relation to the other two could be adjusted according to the size of the pot to be put over the fire. Of these three main stones, the one nearest the woman's bedroom and the one nearest the girls' bedroom were the ones firmly planted in the ground, while the movable one was always the one nearest the doorway.

In addition to the three large stones, every hearth had three smaller moveable hearthstones (*mahagĩ*), which could be used to support small cooking pots if more than one dish was being cooked at a time. These smaller stones were also used at night to close up the gap between the bigger stones so that a small fire could be kept going in the centre without risk of its spreading, or being trodden on by the goats and sheep. The arrangement of these hearthstones is shown in Fig. 5.

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Having thus completed the description of an ordinary Kikuyu hut of the *mũhĩrĩgo* type (with walls made of planks), we must briefly describe the points of difference between that and a brushwood (*rũthwago*) hut.

Construction of a Hut with Brushwood (*Rũthwago*) *Walls*

In areas where timber was scarce, or if the people were too poor to be able to call in many friends to help in preparing the materials for hut building, the walls of huts were made of brushwood instead of planks. In building such a hut, instead of digging a trench all round the circle marked out on the ground as the plan of the hut, a series of post holes were dug. Each post hole was separated from the next by the width of the palm of a man's hand, that is, almost 4 inches and into each post hole two posts were placed, one on the inside of the circle, on the inner wall of the hut, and one on the outside. These posts were made of any wood available and were about 5ft. long, and, the holes being about 12in. deep, they made a wall about 4ft. high. These posts were not very thick, seldom more than 2in. in diameter, and were called *irĩĩgo* (singular *kĩrĩgo*). Between each pair of posts (put into a single post hole) a gap of about 2in. was left when filling in the holes with earth. For a normal sized hut about 160 such posts were required, 80 for the inner ring and 80 for the outer.

When all the posts were in position, brushwood was pressed firmly down between the inner and outer ring of poles to make a solid wall. When the brushwood had been built right up to the top of the poles, the poles were bound firmly together by means of creepers, in the same the way as the tops of the planks of a *mũhĩrĩgo* type of hut. By fastening the tops of each pair of poles together thus, and also fastening all the poles to each other, an exceedingly firm and solid wall was made. The rest of the construction of the hut was the same as for a hut built with planks, and planks were used for the interior divisions in the same way as in the other type of hut, even if a man could not afford planks for the outer walls.

By custom the walls of the woman's bedroom were never made of anything but plank, but the walls of the girls' bedroom varied and were often made of *rũkonjo*, a kind of wicker work hurdle. It

should be mentioned here that in certain families it was customary not to have a wall dividing the head end of the woman's bedroom from the storeroom.

In a married man's hut, of which there was one in each homestead, the divisions were not the same as in a woman's hut. There was no (p.148) screen built across the area in front of the kitchen, and the man's bed was not in the position occupied by a woman's bedroom in her hut, but in the position of the girls' bedroom. Nor was it enclosed by walls to make a bedroom like the woman's bed, but simply had a low wall to hold in the brushwood and bracken that formed its base and mattress.

Often a second such bed was placed opposite where the goats and sheep slept in a woman's hut, while the place where a woman's bedroom would be was normally occupied by a stall for fattening rams and goats. The place where the stall was situated in a woman's hut was where a man kept the hollow log (*mwatũ*) in which he put food and any articles that might be attacked by rats. There was always a platform over the fireplace for drying firewood, and often a small shelf (*gatara*) above the doorway on which to keep packets of saline earth (*mũũnyũ*) and tobacco (*mbakĩ*).

In a young unmarried man's house there were commonly three beds constructed like that of a married man, that is without high enclosing walls. One of these would be placed in the position of the girls' bedroom in a woman's hut, one in the position of the woman's bedroom, and one where the goats and sheep would have been.

Furniture

The essential furniture of a woman's hut was as follows. There were stools (*itĩ*), with a minimum of two, but usually a good many more. These were made by the skilled wood workers of the tribe and are described in Chapter 9. There were one or more narrow mouthed earthenware jars (*ndigithu*) for water, and a number of earthenware cooking pots called generically, *nyũngũ*.

Then there were the gourd jars for brewing beer, the larger kind called *ndua*, and the rather smaller kind, *gĩtumbĩ*. Every hut, too, had a large number of gourd vessels ranging from bottle-shaped gourds with stoppers to half-gourds used as dishes or plates. Every woman's hut, too, had a number of string bags (*ciondo*, singular *kĩondo*) of varying sizes, which were used for bringing crops in from the fields and for general carrying work.

In a corner of the *kwerũ*, where the ordinary goats and sheep slept at night, was a large hollowed out log, much like a big log beehive. This (p.149) was called *mwatũ*, and was used as a food safe for putting away cooked food to protect it from rats and mice.

Outside the hut, under the eaves, were kept the saddle quern and for its rubbing stone for grinding corn (*mahiga ma gũkia*), and the pestles (*mũũthĩ*) and mortar (*ndĩrĩ*); but in a big homestead, several women would share these, and there would not be one to each hut.

In addition to the above mentioned essential furniture, some houses had a container made from a length of bamboo stem (*kĩrangi*) with a stopper of maize cob. This was used for storing such things as feathers for head-dresses. Many huts also had one or more containers (*ihembe*) for storing honey to be used for beer making. (All these articles of furniture are described in Chapter 9).

By the entrance to each bedroom, there were fixed one or more forked sticks (*ihanya*) to act as pegs on which to hang up leather cloaks when their owners went to bed.

Granaries

We must next proceed to the construction of the granaries, of which there were four main types: 1. *ikũmbĩ rĩa gĩthiũrũrĩ*
2. *ikũmbĩ rĩa gĩkonjo*
3. *ikũmbĩ irĩa gitũ* and
4. *ikũmbĩ rĩa mũthũnũ*.

Ikũmbĩ rĩa Gĩthiũrũrĩ

In making *ikũmbĩ rĩa gĩthiũrũrĩ* the first step was to prepare the materials. Those required were innumerable withies (*ndĩ*) cut from bushes of *mũkenia*, *mũthirĩti*, and *karũtĩ ka rũũĩ*. Also needed were some straight young saplings of *mũkarakinga*, which was both strong and pliable, to form the two sets of hoops required in the construction. A quantity of the inner bark of *mũgio* was also needed for tying. When enough withies had been collected the work could be started. First of all two small hoops about 3in. in diameter were made of *mũkarakinga* and these were firmly bound together with *mũgio* inner bark. Into the double hoop thus formed were stuck about 20 withies radially, each about 3ft. long. These firmly wedged between the two bound hoops, and all the points met within the circle of the hoop. (p.150) Then a long piece of *mũgio* bark was tied to each radial withy where it joined the hoop, in readiness for braiding other withies to the radial ones in the following manner. A withy of *mũthirĩti* or *karũtĩ ka rũũĩ* was fastened to one of the radial withies. This withy was then bent round and tied to the next radial withy, and the next, and so on round and round in a spiral curve until the end of the withy was reached. A second was then fastened at the place where the first came to an end, and so the work proceeded until there was a big spiral of withies, each attached to every radial withy, so as to make a firm circular base for the granary.

When this floor had obtained the required size, a diameter of about 3ft. 6in., it was laid flat on the ground, and at intervals of about 4in. al1 round its circumference straight withies about ½ in diameter were stuck into the ground in pairs. The projecting ends of the radial withies were then all bent upwards and tied to the erect withies (called *matimũ*)**.** This done, two hoops of *mũkarakinga* were made, one with a diameter corresponding to the inside of the circle of upright withies and one slightly larger so as to enclose the outside of the circle formed by the uprights. These two hoops were then tightly bound together, as to hold firmly not only all the uprights, but also all the upwardly bent radial withies. This done, the same process of tying withies was continued, until an upright wall of about 3ft had been achieved. When the wall was high enough, two more hoops of *mũkarakinga* wood were made, placed in position, and firmly bound to make a strong collar all round the edge of the granary.

Next came the task of making the roof with an opening for putting in and taking out grain. For a distance of about 18in. along the top of the wall, the straight, upright withies were cut off level with the collar, and then the next upright on either side of the gap was bent over, so that the two joined together to make an arch. These two were firmly bound together with *mũgio* bark, and then all the other upright withies were bent over and the ends inserted into the arch so formed, so that they formed a domed framework over the body of the granary. This domed frame being ready, the tying on of bent withies continued as for the walls, only now the withies were tied to the outside of the framework instead of the inside, until finally the whole dome was covered like the floor and the walls, leaving only a semicircular entrance on top of the wall on one side.

The whole granary, or *ikũmbĩ rĩa gĩthiũrũrĩ***,** was now ready to be taken up and set on the granary platform prepared for it, after which it would be thatched. Since the thatching of all the different granaries was the same, we will leave this description to the last.

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Ikũmbĩ rĩa Gĩkonjo

For an *ikũmbĩ rĩa gĩkonjo* the materials required were the same as for the type already described, but the construction differed in some respects. The base was made in exactly the same way as that described above, and when it had been fastened to the erect withies, for which *mũgere* wood was often used, the uprights for the walls were made fast by means of two hoops as before. The walls, however, were constructed not by tying, but by hurdle-work weaving (*gũkonja*). When the required height had been obtained by weaving process, the doomed-shaped roof was made as for the *ikũmbĩ rĩa gĩthiũrũrĩ***.**

In other words, these two types differed only in respect of the walls. There was a variant of the *ikũmbĩ rĩa gĩkonjo***,** in which the wall was made first by the hurdle-work technique, and when a height of about 2ft. was reached, three sets of erect withies were cut off short so as to form an opening, or doorway, for the granary. The weaving was then continued as before, but when the gap was reached the withies going round the walls were bent and turned back. After another foot of wall had thus been woven, the wall was completed and the roof was domed over as before. The floor of this type was made last, with the granary lying on its side.

Ikũmbĩ rĩa Gitũ

This type of granary differed from the others in having no domed roof. The granary was open at the top except for the thatched roof, to be described presently, which every granary had. The *ikũmbĩ ria gitũ* was sometimes made by the the *gĩkonjo* technique and sometimes by the *gĩthiũrũrĩ* technique.

Ikũmbĩ rĩa Mũthũnũ

Whereas all three types of granaries mentioned above were movable, the *ikũmbĩ rĩa mũthũnũ* was constructed on the spot where it was to be used, and could not be moved about. It was rather in the nature of a temporary granary, for it did not last more than a season or two, (p.152) whereas other types lasted for years. In constructing a granary of this type, the first thing was to mark out a circle in the ground where the granary was to stand, and here set up a whole series of upright sticks called *matimũ*. These were usually of *mũgere* or *mũthirĩti* wood, and would be about 8ft. tall.

At a height of about 18in. from the ground all the way round, two wooden hoops were fixed, one inside the circle of uprights and one outside, and these were firmly bound to hold the whole structure rigidly together. Then bunches of grass of the kind known as *nyaragĩta* were bound to the uprights round and round in a spiral outside, until the walls had reached a height of about three feet from the hoops. Now the work of binding the grass for the floor was begun. The maker would step inside the enclosed circle and insert long sticks through the walls on one side just above the hoops; these were drawn through to the other side of the circle and pushed into the wall there. These transverse sticks would be placed about 4in. apart and then, still sitting inside the circle, he would bind grass to them, until he had the whole floor finished except for the small area on which he had been sitting.

Before he could finish this off, he had to cut short, wooden props of the same height as the space between the floor of the granary and the ground, and set these into the ground on either side of the granary. Then he passed poles under the floor of the granary and rested them on the props, thus supporting the floor at a number of points. He could then sit on the finished part of the floor and complete the tying of the grass for the rest of the floor.

This done, the whole of the grass floor was smoothed over with wet cow dung, which was then dusted over with wood ash. When dry, this made a smooth, firm floor. The walls were not so treated.

After a small opening had been carefully cut into the side of the wall at one point to serve as the door of the granary, through which grain could be put in and taken out, the granary was ready to have a thatched roof made in the same way as any of the other types of granary (see below).

Stands for Movable Granaries

Granary stands for the first three types described were made either of four large stones or four short forked sticks. In the case of stones, all four were almost the same size and were set in a square rather larger than the size of the granary. If stones were scarce, four short forked (p.153) sticks of *mũrema-mũthũa* wood were set into the ground at the corners of the square. These forked sticks for supporting the granary were called *mĩhando ya ikũmbĩ*. Then two strong poles, also of *mũrema-mũthũa*, were set along two sides of the square supported either by the forked sticks or by the stones. These two poles were called *mĩgamba*. Across these two poles were laid a further set of poles of the same wood. These were called *mwarĩro*, and the platform for the granary was ready.

The granary was now lifted up and set firmly on the platform, and six poles of *mũkũngũgũ* were cut and planted in the ground under the platform in the form of a circle exactly the same size as the base of the granary. These poles came up through the open framework of the platform, were firmly tied to the top of the granary, and served to keep it absolutely rigid and in position on the platform. *Mũkũngũgũ* wood was chosen deliberately for these poles, because this tree grew from cuttings, and the Kikuyu hoped that they would take root, live, and so be extra firm, which usually happened.

Constructing the Roof of a Granary

A short forked stick about 3ft. high was stuck into the ground nearby, and used in the construction of the framework of the roof, which would be lifted on to the granary in a half finished state. Four stout saplings were cut; one of these was split at the thick end, and the thick end of a second forced down into the split and tied there. The point of junction of these two sticks was put into the fork of the stick set up for the purpose, and then the other two saplings were laid in the fork in such a way that each of the four radiating sticks was separated at the top by an angle of 90°. Then one small hoop of *mũnderendu* wood was put inside this structure and one outside, and the two firmly bound together and to the saplings.

These four primary rafters (*mĩratho*) were now held in position by the hoops, and the structure was lifted off the forked stick and placed over the granary, so that the ends of the four rafters rested on the edge of the granary, where they were securely tied. More saplings were then fastened to the roof radially until a complete conical roof framework had been completed. A woman then thatched the roof with bracken and grass, and the apex of the cone was finished off with a *mũcobe* stake, as in the case of a hut, so as to hold the bundle of grass (*gĩcĩgĩ*) (p.154) at the apex. When the thatching was finished, six forked roof supports (*itugĩ*) were prepared and set at intervals round the granary and under the eaves. These were made to prop up the primary rafters and support the eaves, and so take some of the weight of the roof off the walls of the granary. Granary openings were closed with short wooden planks (*ihengere*).

As in the case of the grass-walled type of granary, so with the others; the floor was smoothed over on the inside by applying wet cow dung (*rũrua*) dusted over with wood ash (*mũhu*).

Every wife or other dependent married woman in a family had her own granary or granaries, which were never shared, except that a woman's daughters used their mother's granaries until they were married, but only with her consent and under her instructions. They had no rights in these granaries and could not put anything in them or take anything out of them without permission.

Ceremonies connected with a New Hut

After selecting the site (*kĩea*) of a new hut, and before clearing that site and marking out the plan of the hut, a man had to sprinkle some uncooked millet flour·mixed with water (*gĩthambio*) over the site as an offering to the ancestral spirits, saying as he did so, "Give us good building" (*'Tũhei mwako mwega'*). The rest of this mixture was poured into a little gourd (*gĩtete*), which was put into a hollow log while the building proceeded as already described.

The building of a hut, once the materials had been prepared, had to be accomplished in one day, or at least sufficiently completed for the hut to be slept in that same night, for no hut once erected could be left empty, even for a single night, until all the ceremonies connected with it were over.

The first fire was kindled in the newly built hut that same evening. In the case of the huts of people initiated by the Kikuyu guild customs, this new fire was always obtained by bringing in an ember from a garden fire (never from another hut). In the case of those people initiated by the Ũkabi guild customs, the new fire had to be made by means of fire sticks. If by any mischance the fire were to go out that night or at any time before the house was finished, furnished, and blessed with beer, a ram would have to be slaughtered by the elders of the council (*athuuri a kĩama*), and a fresh fire lit ceremoniously with (p.155) fire sticks. A small piece of the meat of the slaughtered animal had to be put in with the kindling as the new fire was lit.

The new fire having been lit on the evening of the day on which the new hut was erected, some more of the millet flour and water was sprinkled over the floor as a further offering to the spirits, and as a token that in due course beer would be brewed in that hut and some of it offered to the ancestors. Then a banana was roasted in the new fire and given to a little boy or girl to eat.

The following day or days were spent completing the inner partitions of the hut and putting up the platform over the fireplace. When all this had been finished, the man whose wife was to occupy the hut or in the case of a man's hut, the man whose hut it was, had to go out and cut two sticks each of *mũkeũ* and *mũthakwa*, and fix one of each kind into the wall on either side of the doorway. By this act the man symbolized the complete building of the hut in a single day, and by doing this he secured himself against any evil that might befall him and his family should any of the hut building taboos have been broken by those who came to help him in the building work.

The subsequent ceremonies connected with a new hut depended entirely upon the circumstances in which the hut was built, and no generalisation is possible.

In the case of a hut built for the new wife of a man who already had a number of wives, after the new wife had occupied the hut for a period of about a month she was told to prepare castor oil "to make the house stand up" (*ya gũũkĩria nyũmba*). Having prepared this castor oil she would tip out the residual husks (*mũkio*) in the entrance area of the village. She then had to go back to her hut and anoint herself with the oil.

This done, the husband arranged for beer to be brewed in the hut, and the man and his wife had each to take a little early in the morning, the man having some in a horn (*rũhĩa*), and the woman some in a gourd cup (*ndahi*). The man had then to pour some out on to each of the three main hearthstones, at each side of the hut, by his wife's bedroom, by the place where the goats and sheep

slept, by the girls' bedroom, and in the space between the doorway and the screen. He did so first from the gourd cup, and then from the horn, after which he refilled both vessels. He then took a sip from the horn, spat it out on to his chest, and drank the rest. Next he handed the gourd cup to his wife, who took a mouthful, spat it out on to her chest, and drank the rest.

When this ceremony was over, they awaited the arrival of the guests, and whereas most of the beer would be divided in accordance with (p.156) custom (see Chapter 8) the biggest *nyanja* had to be given to the men who had helped to build that hut, the *aaki*.

Beer brewed in a hut for the first time after its erection was called *njohi ya kũrugũria nyũmba* (beer for the house-warming), and its chief purpose was to make an offering to the ancestral spirits. Later on the man had to slaughter a ram in the courtyard, holding it with its head facing the entrance to the new hut as he killed it, and the meat of this animal was cooked in the new hut as a further ceremony, this time, "to make the house grow up" (*gũkũria nyũmba*). This was not a sacrifice, but simply a precaution, because at any time a sacrifice might be required in connection with that hut, and the first animal slaughtered for a hut and its occupants should not be a sacrificial one, but one for meat or fat. In some families the animal slaughtered as meat for the occupant of a new hut was killed before the first ceremonial brewing of beer in that hut, but in most families it was not slaughtered until after the first ceremonial beer drink.

In the case of a new hut for a woman whose hut had become dilapidated, burnt down, or otherwise destroyed, it would be treated in the same way as that just described for the hut of a bride.

If a married man and his family decided to move away from where they had been living and build a new homestead at a place so distant that the old building materials could not be moved thither, then the first new hut of the homestead had to be the men's hut, and as soon as it was built and finished the man had to slaughter a ram "for stabbing (and so drawing blood) on behalf of the homestead so that it may become mature" (*ya kũrathĩra mũciĩ nĩguo ũkũre*). The object of slaughtering this ram was that the man might spill the first blood, for if any of his wives were to menstruate in such a homestead before this had been done, purification ceremonies would be needed. When the ram had been slaughtered, some of its blood was allowed to spill on the ground and the rest was caught in a half-gourd (*kiuga*). As the blood spilled on the ground the man had to pray to the ancestral spirits to bless the new village and accept this offering of blood. Most of the meat of this animal was roasted, and those parts to be boiled were cooked in the men's hut, an unusual proceeding in Kikuyu life.

As we have seen, in any new hut the fire might not be allowed to go out on the first night, but once some of the wood ash (*mũhu*) from that fire had been ceremonially taken the next morning from the hearth (a little from between each of the three main hearthstones), and thrown on to the midden (*kĩara*), then it did not matter if the fire went out. It would simply be rekindled from a fire in one of the other huts in the homestead.

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Fire Alarm

In the event of any hut in a homestead catching fire so seriously that it could not be put out immediately by those present, the fire alarm was sounded, and it was the duty of everyone hearing such an alarm to leave whatever they were doing and go immediately to where the alarm was being sounded. The sounding of the fire alarm was vocal and consisted of shouting out, "U-u-u-u-u-u" repeatedly, followed by the words, "A house is on fire" (*'Nyũmba ĩrĩ kũhĩa'*). This was called *kuuga*

mbu (to sound the alarm), and anyone who failed to respond to such an alarm would be condemned by every member of the community, and would be in grave danger of having no one respond to his own call for help should he ever need it.

The fire alarm differed from the alarm for war or for an attack by wild animals only in the words shouted after the *mbu*, or call of, "U-u-u-u-u-u". The sound that attracted attention and made everyone start to run in the direction of this alarm was the long drawn, rising crescendo to the final "u". Even when heard very faintly, the way in which this sound penetrated the minds of all Kikuyu people and stirred them to action is almost unbelievable. I have several times been sitting round a fire at night engaged in earnest conversation with a number of men, when quite suddenly everyone stopped speaking and listened intently. I had heard nothing. "It is the alarm" (*'Nĩ mbu'*) they said, and ran out of the hut to listen more carefully, to hear the words that followed the call and know whether it was an alarm for a fire or an attack, and so determine whether to go armed or just rush off as they were to the rescue. Even in the middle of the night when everyone was asleep, and even at a distance of a mile, the sound seemed to penetrate the minds of the sleepers in an almost supernatural way, and in a moment everyone was awake and on the alert.

When a fire alarm was heard, everyone who heard it rushed to the scene, repeating the alarm as they went for everyone else to hear, and the countryside was soon so full of alarm cries that no one, even if dead could fail to be aware that something was wrong.

As soon as a hut in a homestead caught fire, everybody in any adjacent homesteads and huts would immediately bring out such water as they had in their huts to pour on the flames to help put out the fire. Unless the river was very close indeed they would know that in view of the inflammable nature of the huts it was no use going to fetch water. By the time they had got it, the fire would either have burnt out, or spread into the whole homestead.

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The first action on the part of those in the homestead where the fire broke out, and also of the first arrivals, was to rush into the burning hut and remove any children and any sick or old people there, as well as all the goats and sheep. They also did this immediately to the huts on either side of the one that was alight, as a precaution. Then everyone set to work and tried to extinguish the fire with such water as available, and with dust, earth, and wood ash taken from the middens. If the fire had not got a great hold it could often be extinguished, but if it became obvious that the hut could not be saved, all efforts were concentrated on limiting the fire to that one hut.

If the hut should happen to have granaries near it, they were overthrown bodily and their thatch, which was highly inflammable, was removed.

In the case of huts adjacent to the one that was too much alight to be saved, all property was removed from them as fast as possible, while some of the people set to work to pull off the thatch and dismantle the whole hut so as to save the building materials. Others worked frantically to pull down the fence that connected the burning hut to those on either side, for if the fire once got a hold on this fence it would quickly spread to other huts.

If there were enough people present, some would be ordered to rush off to the nearest banana groves to cut down green banana leaves and bring them to help extinguish the fire, and also to spread over the roofs of the other adjacent huts to protect the thatch from flying sparks.

Gradually, either the original fire would be under control or else most, if not all, of the remaining huts in the homestead would be saved from fire, even if it was at the expense of their having to be

pulled down. Any damage to property caused during this process was always overlooked, and no claims could be made later on account of pots broken by the rescuers, or banana groves destroyed in obtaining leaves to put out the fire.

Once the fire was put out, the people dispersed, but those who would normally sleep in the hut that had been destroyed might not sleep in anyone else's hut that night, except the men's hut of that same homestead. It would be out of the question for them to enter the hut of any other member of the homestead, and similarly none of the property and furniture taken from the hut could be taken into any of the other huts.

On the next day a new hut would be built where the one that was destroyed had stood, and any huts that were pulled down to save the materials would be re-erected. For the work of rebuilding a new hut to replace a burnt one, and for the task of setting up the others that (p.159) were pulled down as a precaution, the owner did not have to summon any help, because automatically on the next day everyone in the neighbourhood came to help, and brought materials—poles, string, grass, etc.—for the new hut, and in the old days it was unheard of for such contributions to be brought in insufficient quantity to build a new hut. By age-long custom the new hut had to be built on the exact spot where the burnt one had stood, for to move it to a new spot would be unlucky, and might cause disaster.

When the debris was cleared in preparation for marking out and building a new hut, all the burnt and charred bits of roof supports and either wall posts or planks, according to what type of hut it had been, were collected, and especially the stumps left sticking in the ground, and these were set on one side to be used as fuel for the sacrifice of "the sheep to put out the fire" (*mbũri ya kũhoria ihĩĩra*) that same afternoon. This ceremony of sacrifice is something that must be described in detail.

While the new hut was being erected, the elders of the council in that village would go and look for a weaver bird's nest (*nyũmba ya thonjo*) and bring it to the homestead. They also plucked some *mũthakwa* leaves and some *mũkengeria* leaves. The ram was then slaughtered; some of its stomach contents and a little of the meat was rubbed over these leaves, which were then set on one side. Next the weaver bird's nest was set up on a stick next to the slaughtered animal, and the elders of the council sat round while the senior man present made fire by drilling with fire sticks, and set light to the nest, which symbolized the hut burnt to the ground on the previous day.

As he set it alight, the others said, "*Hai! Hai! Kaĩ wacina nyũmba?* (Hai! Hai! What? Are you burning the hut?'), and they put out the fire with some of the stomach contents of the ram, thus saving the "hut" from damage by fire. Then one of the elders took "the hut thus saved from burning", wrapped it in some of the *mũthakwa* and *mũkengeria* leaves and took it into the bush and hid it there. The other *mũthakwa* and *mũkengeria* leaves were then put into the roof of the new hut (over the door) symbolising new thatch.

The meat of the animal thus sacrificed could be eaten only by people who had had one of their own huts burned down in the past. No one could eat any of it without the risk of having a fire break out soon in his own homestead. On the next day a piece of meat had to be obtained from an animal someone else had killed, and this had to be burned in the fireplace in the new hut, in the fire that had been kindled there on the previous day either by means of fire sticks or from the embers of a garden fire.

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Causes of Fire

One of the commonest causes of huts catching on fire was the Kikuyu use of fire-brands (*imũrĩ*) as a source of light in their huts. They had no other lamps of any kind. A person using a fire-brand to look for something, in dark corner of the hut was liable to let sparks fall that would smoulder awhile and set the whole hut on fire.

Another common cause of fires was safari ants (*thuraku*). If an army these insects invaded a hut at night it was common practice to attack them with fire-brands and red hot ashes. In examining their line of attack, the people also had to use fire-brands as torches. Both these practices tended to cause fires, because if a man was suddenly bitten he often dropped his torch, and this might easily fall on inflammable material. Once dry, many of the building materials used by the Kikuyu caught fire very easily.

During the daytime fires were sometimes started by children, who, having seen their mothers use fire-brands to go and look for something in a dark corner of the hut, were liable to try to do likewise.

Fires caused by having an open hearth in a thatched hut were rare, because the platform over the fireplace stopped sparks from flying up to the rafters and thatch.

Another well known cause of fires was drunkenness, for when intoxicated a man or woman was liable to fall while carrying a fire-brand so set fire to the walls of a hut. Deliberate incendiarism was not own unknown but that will be discussed under Law and Justice in Chapter 23.

Occasionally, a sudden gust of wind would carry sparks from a fire in the courtyard up to the roof of a hut, but a fire starting on the outside of a roof by day was far easier to put out than one starting on the inside, and it seldom led to the complete destruction of a hut.

Moving a Homestead

The process of moving a homestead from one place to another was called *gũthama*, and such a move might be necessitated by one of several reasons.

If a man had had bad luck in his homestead and he thought it was due to some evil influence on the site, he would consult a diviner and (p.161) would probably be advised to move his whole homestead elsewhere. Such a move might be over a distance of only a 100 yards or so, and it might be anything up to several miles. The new site was selected by the owner of the homestead but had to approved by the diviner.

Another cause for a move would be a man's homestead growing too big for the site it occupied. For instance, a man who had built his own hut and his first and second wives' huts as a subsidiary homestead behind his mother's hut soon found that he had too little room for expansion if he wanted to marry third, fourth, and fifth wives, or if he had women dependants to look after.

Yet another reason for a move would be the need for more land for cultivation. A man who belonged to a family whose estate was not extensive might decide that he preferred living as a tenant on the estate of some family with more land available for cultivation and grazing rather than remaining on his own family land with insufficient room.

A fourth reason for a move would be the death of the head of a homestead, in which case, after the burial had taken place and the homestead had been freed from the blight of death by the ceremony of *kũhukũra***,** it would have to be moved (see Chapter 22).

In the case of moves resulting from any of the first three reasons, that is, voluntary moves, the procedure was as follows. A new site for the homestead having been chosen with the help of a diviner (*mũndũ mũgo*) the day for the move was fixed by the head of the village, and he would *tũmana*, that is, send round and ask the help of a number of his friends and their womenfolk to assist him in the move on the next day.

On the evening prior to the start of the move, he would warn his senior wife not to allow the fire in her hut to go out, nor would he let the fire in his hut go out either. He would also warn his wife to prepare some gruel made of uncooked millet flour and water (*gĩthambio*).

Next morning, he and his senior would initiate the move by performing the following ceremony. They would go into the men's hut and collect some soot attached to the ends of the thatch that always hung down inside the ceiling. This soot and the bit of thatch to which it was attached were jointly called *mũrarĩ*. This *mũrarĩ* had to be taken from just above the doorway inside the hut (*mũromo-inĩ*) and from outside the hut at the back where the thatch meets the wall (*rũgito*). This *mũrarĩ* from the men's hut was tied up with string. Then they did likewise in the woman's hut, keeping her little bundle of soot and thatch separate.

This done the woman took out the oxhide sleeping mats from her (p.162) own bed and from her husband's bed in his hut. She made a bundle of these, tying them up with her carrying strap and fastening the two little bundles of soot and thatch to the load. She also took two stools—hers and his—and tied them to the bundle. The man took two fire-brands, known as *mwaki wa gũtongoria thama* (fire to lead the house-moving), one from his fire and one from the fire in her hut, and he also carried some of the uncooked millet gruel in a gourd bottle (*mbũthũ*), and together they set off to the new site. This was an essential ceremony, and the move could not start until they had performed this rite.

Having arrived at the site of the new homestead, the man and his wife solemnly put down their bundles on the site, and the man lit fire with his fire-brands. This fire had to be kept burning all day and would be used to light the new fires that night, so as to retain continuity with the old homestead, for they were not going to build new huts but merely move the position of the old ones. While they were thus busy, the ordinary sheep and goats that normally went out to graze as a flock everyday (*cia rũũru*) were first driven to the new site, and then taken to graze nearby.

Having lit the fire from his fire-brands, the man took the raw millet flour gruel and poured some in three places on the site (*kĩea*) chosen for his hut, and on the site for the senior wife's hut. Then he took his sword and started to clear these two sites, after which those who had come to help could start in to work. When he poured out the raw millet gruel as described above, he prayed to the ancestors for blessing on the new site.

Meanwhile, at the old homestead, as soon as the man and his wife had removed the bits of thatch with soot from the two huts which were to be moved that day and had set out for the new site, the people who had come to help in the move pulled down the huts, and all the materials of the two structures and the contents were carried to the new site where others were already digging post holes.

By evening both huts would have been rebuilt enough to sleep in, though not necessarily finished, and a fire was made in them. Usually the hearthstones were brought over from the old site with the furniture, but this was not always the case. If not, new ones had to be obtained and be ready for use before the fire was put into the huts.

That evening the man sprinkled the rest of the raw millet gruel on the hearthstones and on the floor of the two huts. Then he and his wife put the sooty thatch which they had brought over back in the (p.163) place from which they had taken it in each of the two moved huts. Next day the woman's granaries were moved, and the moving of the other huts of the homestead, if there were any, was fixed for the third or fourth day.

The ceremony of moving these other huts differed only in that no more fire-brands were taken, since there was already fire from the old homestead in the new one, and great care was taken not to let this go out until the move was completed. Each woman initiated the moving of her own hut by taking sooty thatch from her hut to her husband. With it she took her stool, her husband's stool that was kept in her hut, and her sleeping mat of oxhide. Each wife, too, made raw millet gruel to be used in praying to the ancestors for blessing on her new hut site. No woman's hut could be moved during a menstrual period and if a move had been planned and her period started overnight, the move would have to be postponed.

As soon as all the huts and granaries had been moved, but before the new homestead had been completed by having a fence built round it, the owner had to slaughter a ram as a sacrifice to the spirits, just as it had to be done in a new village. This was also to ensure that the first blood spilt there was an animal's and not human blood, such as that of a menstruating woman. After the animal had been slaughtered, the senior wife had to prepare castor oil, and place the residual oil husks in the homestead entrance (*thome*). All the women anointed themselves with this oil.

If a man's widowed mother (or any other widow of his father) was moving with him when he decided to move, her hut had to be moved before his own hut or his senior wife's hut, for the widow had priority. At least a month had to elapse after moving his mother's hut before a man started to move his own homestead. The site for his hut was chosen so as to be in the correct relationship to her hut.

If a homestead was moved due to the death of its head, after the ceremony of *kũhukũra* (freeing it from the blight of death) had been performed, it was essential that every single hut be moved from the old site on the same day, and so a large number of people had to be asked to help. It did not matter if all the huts were re-erected that same day providing that everything to be moved was moved and carried away, for no one could return for anything on the next day. Moreover, on the day of the move, an old man had to be asked to sit at the old site all day while the move was in progress, and he might not leave it at all until the last object had been taken away. In return for this (p.164) service a ram was slaughtered for him to eat during the day, and the rest of the meat and skin was also his.

Female dependants, other than a widowed mother or any other of the dead man's widows, did not move so soon; they waited until the move was completed and the new village in order; then, and only then, could their huts be moved.

Apart from the four reasons for a move that have been enumerated, a Kikuyu homestead was never moved, and many occupied the same spot from the time they were first set up as separate and distinct units (as opposed to subsidiary homesteads), to the time when the head of the homestead died, which might be anything from 30 to 50 or more years. During the course of this time, most of the huts required repair and even rebuilding (a well built hut would last without repair for anything from 15 to 30 years), but they continued to occupy the same spot. Once the head of a homestead had died, however, a move was essential, even if only to a spot 100 yards away (see Chapter 22).

In the event of a run of misfortune such as a series of deaths, cattle sickness, etc. a man usually tried to have the homestead purified by means of the ceremony of *gũthiũrũra mũciĩ* (encircling the homestead), before he embarked upon a move.

Members of the Ũkabi guild, when they moved in the way described above, also took a fire-brand from the men's hut with them, but the new fire was made by drilling with fire sticks and had to be lit with either *mũtamaiyũ* or *mũtarakwa* wood.

When a move had been completed and the whole homestead was in order, beer was brewed for a "house-warming", and all the people who had helped in the move and who were eligible to drink beer came to partake of it. Those who had set up the various huts drank theirs in the huts they had helped to build. First, in the early morning, some of the beer was offered to the ancestral spirits, after being poured into a horn and a gourd cup, and in the evening, after everyone had departed, the *mairĩtĩ* (dregs left purposely in each beer jar) were poured out by the owner in the middle of the courtyard as a further oblation to the ancestors and to God.

Having completed a move, the owner of the homestead had to sleep with his senior wife before he slept with any of the others, and then, at intervals, with each of the others in the order of their seniority, which had been the order in which they had moved. He did not necessarily have full sexual intercourse with them all in turn, as some might be with child, etc. but he had at least to spend a night in their huts with them in the order in which he had married them and they had become members of his old village.

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Rites associated with the Building of a New Homestead in an Established Fortified Village

If a man who had not participated in the building of a fortified village later wanted to build a homestead within the fortifications, he was allowed to do so if there was room for him, but he had to pay a fee of a big ram or goat, and undergo a special ceremony. The ram was called "a ram for the sleeping mat" (*mbũri ya ndarũa*), and before the man entered the fort with his sleeping mats, goats, and sheep, this sacrificial ram or he-goat had to be slaughtered by the council elders of the fort in the entrance area. Then they took two stems of *mũhoroha*, rubbed them with the stomach contents of the slaughtered animal, and laid them across the entrance of the palisade. The man and his wife and all his flocks had to walk in over these *mũhoroha* stems. When they had all passed, an elder laid them in the entrance area. After the lapse of a month or two, when the new inhabitant had settled in, he had to produce "a goat for settling down" (*mbũri ya gĩikaro*). This was a fee rather than an animal for ceremonial sacrifice, and was eaten by the elders of the village. This gave the new inhabitant full rights in the village, including rights to eat meat killed in village ceremonies.

Village, Homestead and Hut Taboos and Regulations

These were a large number of taboos connected with the village, homestead, and hut, and the breaking of any of these taboos, either accidentally or deliberately, involved ceremonial purification and to often sacrifice. The details of the purification ceremonies involved are to be found in the chapter dealing with Ceremonial Purification (Chapter 28). Here is a list of the more important prohibitions:

1. In no circumstances might all the fires in a homestead be allowed to go out together. For the purposes of this rule the subsidiary homestead of a married son attached to his father's homestead counted as part of the main homestead.

2. If a hyena should enter a village or homestead and dung either in the open clearing of the entrance area (*thome*) or in any courtyard (*nja*), a ceremonial purification was essential.

3. If the owner of a homestead cut himself and drew blood (p.166) either while in the homestead or when he was out in the field, he had to sacrifice a goat or sheep for purification.

4. If a woman was preparing castor oil from castor oil berries, and during the process of heating them over the fire, she either let them boil over or dry up in the pot, a purification ceremony and sacrifice was essential.

5. If anyone, other than a child that had not been "born a second time," or a very sick person, defecated within a hut or in a courtyard, a purification ceremony was essential.

6. Should any beast—calf, goat, or sheep—suck or lick any part of a human in a homestead, that animal had to be sacrificed for a purification ceremony at the village of a relation-in-law.

7. If a jackal barked in the entrance area or in the courtyard of a homestead, a ceremonial purification was necessary.

8. If anyone deliberately broke a cooking pot or a gourd in a homestead, the purification ceremonies and sacrifices involved the slaughter of seven goats and sheep.

9. Should a toad, frog, or lizard fall or jump into the fire in the hearth of a hut, a purification ceremony was essential.

10. If a cooking pot cracked while food was being cooked in it, that food might not be eaten except by women past childbearing.

11. If an owl hooted near a homestead, or worse still, perched on any hut or granary, purification was necessary.

12. If a snake was killed within the confines of a homestead, a purification ceremony had to take place.

13. No one might touch or approach the midden dump (*kĩara*) of a homestead other than the members of that homestead. If they did so, a purification would be necessary.

14. Should anyone in anger or drunkenness pluck thatch from any hut in a homestead, a sacrifice and purification would be essential to avoid disaster.

15. It was taboo for a man to sleep on the side by the outer wall of his wife's bed.

16. It was taboo to start moving a woman's hut to a new site while she was menstruating.

17. It was taboo for a fire in a hut to go out at any time when beer was being brewed in that hut, or when any special ceremony or sacrifice was taking place in that hut or in connection with it.

18. In a woman's hut, the head end of her bed was towards the *thegi* and the foot end towards the *kwerũ*. The head end of girls' bed was towards the *gĩcegũ* and the foot end towards the (p.167) *thegi* (see Fig. 5). It was taboo for anyone to sleep in these beds except with their head at the end of the bed.

19. It was taboo to lean a spear up against the roof of a hut. All spears had to be either stuck in the ground, or leaned against the fence or under the eaves. There was no penalty for breaking this taboo, but it was never done.

20. It was taboo to kill a bird called *nyamĩndigi* (*Cossypha* or Robin chat) within the confines of the homestead.

21. If a kite, when flying over a homestead, let its droppings on any person, that person had to be purified, the manner of purification depending upon the sex of the person involved.

22. If a man or woman fell down within their own homestead, purification and sacrifice were necessary.

23. It was taboo to come into contact with the menstrual blood of any other person (something which could happen easily in a hut), and purification was necessary if this happened. (There were certain minor exceptions; see Chapter 29 on Marriage and Sex).

24. When entering a hut, a person had to pass to the right of the hearth.

25. In certain circumstances huts were pulled down and either left to rot or the materials stacked for future use; these circumstances were linked with death and divorce respectively, and will be discussed in the chapters dealing with those aspects of Kikuyu life.

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Introduction

Although the Kikuyu people had many cattle, goats, and sheep, and regarded them as essential to life, and although these animals were intomately connected with the religious life and social functions of the tribe, it remains true that the Kikuyu were primarily an agricultural people, for the products of agricultural pursuits, were the mainstay of their lives and the chief source of food and intoxicants.

So true was this that meat and milk were not regarded as "food" at all, and were consumed as an extra, just as Europeans regard chocolates and sweets not as food but as extras. Moreover, although Kikuyu people ate meat on a great many occasions, it was seldom that any animal was killed for the sake of its meat. In most cases, meat, when eaten, was eaten in connection with some religious ceremony or sacrifice, or in connection with some sociological function, the exceptions to this rule being animals killed for a meat feast (*kĩrugũ*), or animals that had died from an accident or disease.

Since the Kikuyu were also forbidden by custom to eat the meat of wild animals, except in the case of boys prior to initiation and those Kikuyu who had adopted a hunting mode of life, it follows that for food they were dependent upon agriculture, and we must now consider this aspect of Kikuyu life.

Methods of Cultivation

As we have already seen in the chapter dealing with Kikuyu land tenure, the country south of the Chania River was, when the Kikuyu entered it, almost entirely forest with occasional glades and patches of grass land; and we must first consider the methods used in transforming virgin forest into cultivated fields.

After buying a patch of forest from the Wandorobo as an estate and selecting a part of it for clearing, the men used their cultivating knives (*hiũ mengere*) to cut down all the brushwood and undergrowth, and made piles of this ready for burning. This done, the bigger trees had to be felled, and this was done with axes (*mathanwa*). These axes were (p.169) small and not very efficient, so it often took two men a whole day to fell one fairly large tree.

It was not the practice to fell every tree in a clearing, but rather to thin out the trees, leaving the straighter ones standing at intervals of 30 or 40 yards. Leaving some of the trees served two purposes. In the first place, if an area looked like forest from a distance, wandering Maasai warriors seeking an opportunity to blood their spears were less likely to come and attack the cultivators; secondly, by leaving the straighter trees standing for the time being, a reserve supply of good timber for building material was retained.

As the felling of the trees progressed, the better ones were cut up and made into rough-hewn planks (*mĩhĩrĩgo*) and roof supports (*itugĩ*), while the branches were attacked by the women and cut into lengths for firewood. Along the outer fringes of the area selected for cultivation bigger trees were usually felled outwards and left to form a sort of fence similar to that called *ngando* for a fortified village enclosure, but these fences for the fields were not carefully made, the owners preferring to trust to traps and night watching for the protection of their crops.

When a sufficiently large area of forest land had been cleared, all the undergrowth and smaller branches from the trees that had been felled were burnt. The field was immediately ready for planting, since under the forest trees there was leaf mould and loose soil but not grass, and there was, therefore, no need to dig up the ground in preparation for planting.

The actual methods of crop planting will be described presently, for they were the same in forest clearings as on land cleared after fallowing, or on land that had been grass covered.

In the districts that had been occupied by the Kikuyu for several generations, the areas suitable for cultivation had been cleared of forest in the early days, and fresh cultivation was on land that had been to fallow and return to bush. Such land usually took a great deal more preparation than virgin forest, for once the bush had been cleared by cutting it down with knives, the ground had to be "hoed". Actually, the Kikuyu did not use a hoe as such, but rather a big digging stick called *mũnyago*. This was a stout pole, about 6ft. and 2in. in diameter, of a hard wood such as *mũhũgũ*, *mũtamaiyũ*, *mũgũcwa*, or *mũtikani*.

The method of digging up the ground with these digging sticks was as follows. A man would, with the help of his family, get the work well started, and then arrange with two or three others to come and work with him in the *ngwatio* system, that is to say, digging together in (p.170) rotation in the fields of each man in turn. When digging thus, the men worked in pairs and did not attempt to dig up all the ground, but rather to dig long lines at intervals of say 8ft leaving the intervening, patches undug. These lines were called *mĩtunda* (singular *mũtunda*). In digging a *mũtunda* two men worked side by side, driving their digging sticks into the ground about 18in. apart and levering up a big sod (*ngũgĩ*). Having dug up one sod, the men stepped back a pace and turned a second sod, and so on, until they had a long line of sods for say, 30 yards. Meanwhile, two other men were working in the same way in a line parallel to theirs about 8ft away. Then they moved further along and dug more lines until the whole area of the proposed garden was divided up into lines of turned sods and patches of undug soil.

Having got thus far with the work, a man would arrange for a big working party for a single day, and make his wives cook a plentiful supply of food for them to eat while they worked, as well as beer to be drunk in the evening when the work was over. Twenty or thirty men would form such a working party, and all their wives and womenfolk would come too. The men each brought their digging sticks, and the women came with their digging knives, and with small digging sticks called *mĩro*. The men would then attack the patches of untouched soil between the previously dug lines

(*mĩtunda*), and working all in a line, turn over the sods at right angles to them. In this way it was possible to complete the digging of the undug patches very speedily.

Meanwhile, the women started in behind them and attacked the sods with their knives and short digging sticks, and harrowed them, that is, broke them up, shook out the roots of the grass and bushes, and put these into piles for burning. Digging systematically in this way, a working party would usually complete the digging in a single day, or else, leave so little to be done that the man could finish it for himself in another few days.

The harrowing performed by the women was called *kũhukũria*. In areas where there was couch grass (*thangari*), it had to be done very carefully, because if roots or little bits of grass were left in the soil they would soon grow again and be a menace to the crops. When women were working at this task they always worked bent from the hips with their knees straight, legs slightly apart, and heads well down, they could work for hours in this position without fatigue. Men, if they helped in the harrowing, never adopted this position, but squatted their heels.

In grass land that was not bush-covered, there was no need for men to clear the land before digging it with digging sticks. The grass, (p.171) even if long, was simply turned over with the sods, which were then harrowed out by the women.

Most Kikuyu cultivation was either on fairly flat land (*gituamba*),or else the gentler slopes of the hills. It was only in areas where the population was dense that the steeper slopes were turned into fields.

On the other hand, the small terraces of alluvial soil on either side of the streams and rivers were much favoured for cultivation of special crops such as sugar-cane and edible arum, both of which needed plenty of moisture, and every man aimed at having at least one patch of riverside cultivation in addition to his fields on higher ground.

In areas where the population was not dense, it was customary to keep a field in cultivation for three or four years and then to let it lie fallow for several years before clearing it again. At the same time, the Kikuyu system of cultivation and crop planting resulted in a certain amount of crop rotation, and some fields were kept in constant use for ten or more years without ever being allowed to lie fallow, and with no apparent deterioration in the crop yield.

In choosing a site for fresh cultivation in areas which had been long inhabited, a man would always try to find a place which had formerly been the site of a homestead. Such a site was known as *iganjo*, and it was well known that it would be particularly rich, because of all the manuring that it had had from sheep, goat and cow dung. If a man cultivated the site of an old homestead he would either spread out the midden material over the whole area to fertilise it, or leave the midden intact and plant it over with gourd plants and tobacco, which needed rich soil and would flourish on such a site. An old homestead site was nearly always cultivated by members of the family who had formerly occupied it, for a landowner would seldom allow a mere tenant the privilege of using such specially fertile ground.

When a man cleared a fresh field and had cut down the bush and dug the ground over with digging sticks as described, he apportioned the field into separate gardens for his wives and widowed mother, if he had one, before the harrowing was carried out. Thus each woman was made responsible for her own harrowing, which she either completed herself or with the help of her own friends.

If a man had a widowed mother dependent on him, she could choose the strip of land (*rũthanju*) for her own garden, from the field that had been cleared and dug, and her son would never say to his mother, "You are claiming too big a portion". If she claimed such a big garden that there was not enough cleared land left for his wife or wives, he would simply proceed to clear and dig a fresh area.

As far as the land to be allotted to his wives was concerned, it was (p.172) the husband who divided it among them, in the form of long strips, apportioning the larger piece to the woman with the most children and the smaller to the wife with fewer mouths to feed. Each woman was responsible for the planting, weeding, and harvesting of crops in her own garden, and the crops she planted and harvested were her own and were put into her own granaries for the use of herself and her children.

In any garden in a man's field, whether apportioned to his mother or to his wives, he had the right to plant "man's crops" such as bananas and yams, but these were always planted so as to leave plenty of space for other crops. A young unmarried man often cleared and dug up a garden for himself, and then got his mother and unmarried sisters to work in it for him. In this he planted "man's crops" such as sugar-cane, bananas, and yams, while his mother and sisters planted "woman's crops", and these, when harvested, became his mother's property. No unmarried girl ever had a garden or a granary of her own; she simply helped her mother.

When a man who already had several wives married another, he always gave the new wife a portion of the garden of each of his other wives, but they had the right, if they wished, to harvest their own growing crops on the piece given to the new wife before she took it over. In spite of this right, they seldom did so because they did not wish to be unfriendly. In addition to giving a new wife a part of the garden of each wife senior to herself, a man, when about to marry a new wife, cleared a special new area of land for her as well, and when this had been cleared and dug, she and her friends would come to harrow it and get it ready before she was married. This new garden prepared for a bride was always made larger than she really needed, and it was customary for her to ask her husband to apportion parts of it to each of the other wives, as a kind of compensation for having been given part of each of their gardens.

It would seem to European minds more reasonable to give a new wife an entirely new garden and not give her part of the existing gardens of the other wives. The Kikuyu objection to this was that it was fairer to let the new wife have part of the old gardens in return for which she let them have a part of the new garden made for her, because in this way each wife got a patch of virgin soil for her next season's crops, as well as some already partly exhausted soil.

Whenever a man cleared a new area for cultivation, no matter how many wives he had, each of them had to be given a garden in the field to add to their existing gardens. It thus happened that every wife had a number of gardens scattered here and there instead of one (p.173) big one, and this was a safeguard against total loss of food supply. It was a case of not having "all one's eggs in one basket", for, if cattle got into a cultivated area, or if locust swarms came, all the crops of one field would probably be damaged, but the other fields which also had food belonging to each woman might escape.

The Kikuyu Calendar

Before proceeding to consider the Kikuyu methods of crop planting and harvesting, we must briefly examine the Kikuyu calendar to see how the year was divided up into seasons and months. The Kikuyu year was not divided into lunar months at all, although the passage of lunar months,

which had no names, was noted in connection with various ceremonies. The Kikuyu word *mwaka*, which is now applied to an English year, was formerly the word used for the period from one rainy season to another, a period of about six months; thus, to each year in the English sense of the word there were two *mĩaka*. One of these was the *mwaka wa njahĩ* (season when one grows *njahĩ* beans), followed by the *mwaka wa mwere* (season when one grows bulrush millet). (An alternative word for *mwaka* was *kĩmera*, but this word, in its strictest sense, was used only for the beginning part of each new *mwaka*).

According to some Kikuyu, each *mwaka* had nine divisions roughly corresponding to lunar months, but they were in actual fact considerably shorter, varying from 20 to 30 days, with an occasional division missed completely. The divisions recognised by those Kikuyu who divided a *mwaka* into nine parts were as follows:

Kĩhu
Wathima, also called *Mũringo*
Gathano
Mũthaatũ
Mũgira-njara
Gacicia, also called *Gathano ka Rũgũru*
Mworia-nyoni
Kagaa
Mũgaa also called *Mwania-thenge*, or *Mũratho*.

Most Kikuyu agreed that a *mwaka* should have nine divisions corresponding to the nine months of a woman's period of gestation, and it was equally agreed that every *mwaka* started with the division called (p.174) *Kĩhu* (the big womb) and ended with the division known as *Mũgaa*, when the crops were harvested. In the period from October to February, the *mwaka wa mwere*, the *Gathano* and *Mũthaatũ* were often missed altogether, while the other divisions were run together. The Kikuyu divisions can be matched approximately with the English calendar.

The Kikuyu Calendar

English months	Kikuyu months		
Last third March	*Kĩhũ*	*Mbura ya Njahĩ*	
April	*Wathima*	The *njahĩ* (lablab	
May	*Gathano*	bean rains)	*Mwaka wa Njahĩ* (Season when one grows lablab beans)
June	*Mũthaatũ*		
First half July	*Mũgira-njara*		
Last half July	*Gacicia*		
First half August	*Muoria-nyoni*		
Last half August	*Kagaa*		
September	*Mũgaa*		
October	*Kĩhũ*	*Mbura ya Mwere*	
First half November	*Wathima*	The *mwere* (bulrush millet rains)	*Mwaka wa Mwere* (Season when one grows bulrush
Last half November	*Gathano*		
December	(*Mũthaatũ*		
and	(*Mũgira-njara*		
January	(*Gacicia*		
	(*Muoria-nyoni*		

February	*Kagaa*	millet)
First two-thirds March	*Mũgaa*	

Many Kikuyu have told me that in fact there were nine full lunar months to a *mwaka*, or 18 between the beginning of one *mbura ya njahĩ* or one *mbura ya mwere* and the next, matching one English year; but this is obviously impossible, and they admitted that in the *mwaka wa mwere* several divisions were usually missed, and that sometimes one or two divisions of the *mwaka wa njahi* were also missed.

Crops

The following is a list of the principal food plants grown by the Kikuyu before the coming of the Europeans. Some of these have since almost (p.175) ceased to be grown and new crops such as imported potatoes, known as *waru* or *ngwacĩ cia Gĩthũngũ* (English potatoes), and garden peas, now called *njũgũ*, have take their place.

Mbembe (Maize or Indian corn—*Zea mays*). Three varieties: *nyamũkũũ*, *njerũ*, *nyamũthaka*.

Mwere (Bulrush millet—*Pennisetum typhoides*). Two varieties were recognised, one much taller than the other. The taller one was called *mũraya* (tall).

Mũkombi (Foxtail millet—*Setaria italica*).

Ũgĩmbĩ (Finger millet—*Elensine coracana*). Two varieties: one simply called *ũgĩmbĩ* and the other known as *ũgĩmbĩ wa gĩcara*.

Mũhĩa (Indian Millet—*Sorghum*). Three varieties *mũthakame*, *nyamwerũ*, *mũruge*. The last variety was huskless and was eaten raw.

Ngwacĩ (Sweet potatoe—*Ipomoea batatas*). Five varieties: *mũndoro*, *nyakĩbũri*, *nyagĩkenye, nyamũirũ*, *nyacagatha*.

Gĩkwa (pl. *Ikwa*) (Yam—*Dioscorea*). Five varieties: *mũcara*, *mũcoho*, *ngĩrĩrĩ*, *ngwa-njirũ* (also called *ngwa-naaro*), *mũrema·agendi* (also called *mũcahĩ*).

Njahĩ (Lablab bean—*Lablab purpureus*). Three varieties: *nyakabũri*, *nyamũirũ*, *nyagakondi*.

Njũgũ (Pigeon or Bush pea—*Cajanus cajan*). Two varieties: *nyagĩkoro*, *nyamũirũ*.

Thoroko (Cowpea—*Vigna unguiculata*). Two varieties: *nyagĩkoro*, *gacũri*.

Ngĩna (Green gram—*Vigna radiata*). Only one variety, which was alternatively known as *thuu*.

Mboco (Kidney bean—*Phaseolus vulgaris*). Three varieties: *nyamweri* (also called *kĩboro*), *nduria*, *gacũri*.

Ndũma (Edible arum—*Colocasia esculenta*). The plant was also called *mweũ* and four varieties were recognised: *ndirũ*, *ragatĩ*, *thangari*, *ya mwanake*.

Kĩgwa (Sugar-cane—*Saccharum officinarum*). Five distinct varieties: *nyamũirũ*, *nyamũnjerũ*, *nyamũcũra*, *nyamũmbũcĩ*, *nyamũteta* (this was only a sub-variety of *nyamũmbũcĩ*).

Irigũ (pl. *Marigũ*) (Banana—*Musa*). The South Kikuyu recognised only eight varieties, but north of the Chania River far more were recognised. The South Kikuyu (p.176) varieties were *njuuru* (also called *mũcuuru*), *mũraru*, *mũtahato*, *mũtika*, *mũthĩrĩrĩ*, *mũnjũũ*, *mbiri*, *gatumia*.

Mũgwacĩ (pl. *Mĩgwacĩ*) (Cassava—*Manihot esculenta*). This was planted occasionally, although in olden days it was not popular. No varieties were recognized.

The 16 food plants listed above, comprising in all, 49 varieties, were regarded by the Kikuyu as their principal source of food and intoxicating drink, the latter being derived from sugar-cane.

In addition to these food plants, certain wild plants provided food regularly in the form of green leaves used as spinach. All leaves so used were called *nyeni*, and several of the cultivated plants mentioned above, such as the *njahĩ* bean, cowpea, the *thangari* species of edible rum, and beans, had edible leaves. In addition, the following wild plants provided leaves as a spinach: *terere* (*Amaranthus* spp)., *togotia* (*Erucrastrum arabicum*), *kĩgerema* (*Coccinea trilobata*), *kĩhiũ* (*Lactuea* sp. *et al*), *thabai* (*Urtica massaica*), and *managu* (*Solatium nigrum*). Of these the most favoured were *terere, togotia*, and *thabai*. In addition to the food plants mentioned in the list given above, the Kikuyu cultivated the blowing plants for various economic purposes:

Mũbarĩki	(Castor oil—*Ricinus communis*). Two varieties: *nyagĩkubu*, *thigithigi*.
Mbakĩ	(Tobacco—*Nicotiana tabaccum*). Only one variety: *nyagacũri*.
Rũũngũ	(Gourd plant—*Lagenaria siceraria*). Four varieties: *rũũngũ rũa ndua, rũũngũ rũa mĩcema, rũũngũ rũa nyanja, rũũngũ rũa inandũ*.
Ihũithia Rĩerũ	(*Kalanchoe marmorata*). Only one variety of *Kalanchoe*, that with light-coloured leaves, was cultivated (for a variety of purposes); the other with dark green leaves was never cultivated, although sometimes utilised.
Nyeki ya Kĩgutu	(Thatching grass—*Sporolobus fimbriatus*). This variety of grass was cultivated for thatching.
Mũhukũũra	(*Mondia whitei*). Only one variety of *Mondia* was recognised. It was planted for the sake of its roots, which provided a powder used in magic. It was also in great demand among the Maasai, who traded for it.
Ng'ondu ya Kĩondo	(*Notonia petreae*). A creeping plant used in purification ceremonies.

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Planting Methods

We must now examine the methods and seasons for planting those plants listed, after which we will discuss the methods of tending and harvesting the crops.

Mbembe maize planted by the Kikuyu was, as we have seen, of three varieties. All three were small-cobbed, quick-maturing varieties. *Njerũ* was yellow and *nyamũthaka* was a purple-grained maize, while *nyamũkũũ* had a preponderence of white grains with a few scattered dark purple ones The maize crop was planted twice a year, at the beginning of the long rains (*mbura ya njahĩ*) and again at the beginning of the short rains (*mbura ya mwere*). It was a woman's crop, but at the same time there was no taboo against a man planting it, and men sometimes helped their wives in this task, especially if the latter were not well.

To plant *mbembe*, a bag of seed was slung over the shoulder so that it hung down in front of the waist. The planter had either a short digging stick (*mũro*) or a digging knife (*kahiũ ga kũrĩma*) in the right hand. Taking a handful of seed in the left hand, the planter moved across the area, bent from the waist, and at intervals he or she thrust the knife or stick into the soil at an angle of about 45°, levering it slightly forward. Then with the left hand a few seeds were thrown into the hole and the stick or knife withdrawn, letting the soil fall back lightly over the seed. Maize was planted fairly widely, and quite irregularly spaced, so as to leave room for the other crops to be planted in the same plot in accordance with the recognised custom to be discussed later.

Normally, three or four grains of maize were planted in each hole and all of them allowed to grow to maturity, although if they seemed to be crowding each other too much they might be thinned

out a bit when the time for the weeding came. If maize was to be planted in a garden, it was usually the first crop to be sown, particularly if it was a new garden.

Mwere (*Bulrush Millet*)

This was a woman's crop and was seldom handled by men. If a man's (p.178) wife was ill he would ask some other woman to plant the crop for her, although there was no actual taboo against his planting it himself.

Bulrush millet was planted only during the short rains (*mbura ya mwere*), because if planted during the long rains it would be fully mature before the dry season came and rot before it could be harvested. It was planted with the knife or digging stick, like maize, but normally it was not planted in the same plot as other crops. It was planted by itself and close together to facilitate the work of scaring the birds from it when it was ripening. The only other crops that were occasionally planted in the same plot were maize, the varieties of bean called *nyamweri* (also called *kĩboro*), and sometimes sweet potatoes. The latter were planted in this plot only if its owner had no wish to use the same plot next season for *njahĩ* (lablab beans). If maize was to be planted at all in the bulrush millet plot, it was planted along the borders (*ndere*) the object being to provide maize cobs to be eaten on the spot by the people scaring off the birds at harvest time.

If the *nyamweri* bean was planted in this plot it was planted at long intervals. It was a ground creeping bean that did not interfere with the main crop.

Mũkombi (*Foxtail Millet*)

Foxtail millet was another woman's crop, and, like bulrush millet, and for the same reasons, it was planted in the short rains, usually in a plot by itself. Instead of being planted with the digging stick, however, it was sown by scattering the seed over the ground and then digging the ground again so as to turn the seed into the soil.

Ũgĩmbĩ (*Finger Millet*)

This crop was not so common in South Kikuyu as it was in other parts, but those who planted it usually set apart a small plot for it alone, and it was usually sown by scattering the seed and then digging over the ground again. The two varieties of finger millet were treated alike. The variety known as *ũgĩmbĩ wa gĩcara* gave a bigger yield and was favoured by the Kikuyu. Some people planted it like maize with a knife or digging stick, but this was regarded as unsatisfactory. (p.179)

Mũhĩa (*Sorghum*)

Like maize, sorghum was also essentially a woman's crop, but there was no taboo against a man planting it if his wife was ill. Usually each woman tried to plant all three varieties of sorghum, or two at any rate, one being that known as *mũthakame*, which was regarded as specially good for making gruel, but which could not be eaten raw. In addition, a woman always tried to plant some of either of the other two kinds, *mũruge* or *nyamwerũ*, both of which were good to eat raw, and regarded as one of the best forms of food for taking on a journey. Sorghum was not normally planted all over a patch of cultivation like maize, but, rather, in lines known as *ndiriho*, along the sides of a garden or strip of cultivation. This was not a rule, but was a long standing custom, based on the need to keep the plants close together so as to make it easier to scare the birds from them at harvest time.

There were two ways of planting sorghum. It could be done in exactly the same way as maize, except that in place of three or four grains to each hole, it was normal to put in 10 to 15.

Alternatively, sorghum was sown thickly over a small area, and when the seedlings were about 6in. high they were transplanted. Some 10 or 15 seedlings were then planted together at intervals along the line chosen for the *ndiriho*. The different varieties were planted separately, never together, so that they would not get mixed at harvest time. Sorghum was planted only at the beginning of the long rains, and it did not mature until after the short rains were over. It was, in fact, harvested with the bulrush millet crop, although planted 10 months before.

Ngwacĩ (*Sweet Potato*)

Sweet potatoes were never propagated by seed or by means of tubers, but solely by means of cuttings. These cuttings were planted by both men and women when the rains had been on for some time, so that the moisture had penetrated well down into the soil. When the soil was considered suitably damp, the planter went to one of his existing gardens where sweet potatoes were growing, picked many lengths of vine, took them to the new area, and planted them straight away. By the time the rain had penetrated deep enough into the soil for sweet (p.180) potatoes to be planted, the other crops on that plot of ground (maize, beans etc). would be well above ground, and the sweet potato cuttings were inserted in the gaps which had been left for the purpose when the other seeds were planted.

To set the cuttings, a digging knife was used to dig a small trench about 9in. long, 3in. wide, and 6-8in. deep. The length of vine was laid in this so that about half of it would be buried when the earth was put back in the trench, while the remaining half was left sticking out. The soil was then pressed down firmly. The leaves of the cutting all withered and dried, but in a week or so the cutting would have taken root and new leaf buds would start to form at the points where the leaves had been. The part of the cutting set in the trench sent out roots in all directions, and tubers eventually formed on all these roots. Sweet potatoes were planted during both rainy seasons, but more particularly during the long rains.

Gĩkwa (*Yam*)

All the different varieties of yams were planted in the same manner, and were essentially men's crops, being planted, tended, and harvested by men.

When a man wanted to plant some yams, he went to a place where he had well established plants, and from the great mass of tubers (*mahĩndĩ*) at the base of the plant, he cut off large chunks. These he took with him to the new plot, where he dug a hole about 1ft. in diameter and 8in. deep. The chunk of old root was inserted with the *mũcongo* (original root side of the chunk) facing downwards, and the *mũtimũ* or stem side upwards. Then he filled the hole with soil and marked the spot with a stick. After about a month the first shoots of the new plant appeared above the ground, and when they were about 1ft. high the man stuck a branch of *mũrigono* or *muutĩ* wood in the ground for the vines to climb. This first stick for the yam shoot to climb, was called *mũhiũkio* and was only a temporary support, pulled up when it was no longer needed, and not allowed to take root.

After the plant was 3 or 4ft. high, and covering the stick nicely, the man would set a branch of a *mũkũngũgũ* tree as a cutting about 2ft. from the base of the yam, and lean the first supporting stick towards it. The yam vine was thus led towards the *mũkũngũgũ*, which would be its permanent support, but which could not be planted any closer to it, as the tree roots would prevent the yam plant from growing good tubers.

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A yam, once planted, did not come into yield until after three or more rainy seasons, that is, about two years, and thereafter it continued to form yam tubers for anything up to 30 years. A plot of ground in which yams were planted was therefore rarely allowed to go fallow. Both the yam vine and the *mũkũngũgũ* support were pruned from time to time.

Njahĩ (*Lablab Bean*)

Njahĩ were planted by women only, and were planted at the beginning of the long rains (*mbura ya njahĩ*) in the way already described for planting maize. They were normally planted on those plots which had been devoted exclusively to bulrush and foxtail millet in the short rains, as these plants were pulled up after harvesting in the hot weather before the long rains started, and the land was then available for another crop. However, in addition to these special plots where *njahĩ* were planted by themselves, the women planted a few *njahĩ* seeds in among the maize crop. Those *njahĩ* planted in the plot by themselves were usually set aside especially for the old men (*athuuri*), while those mixed with the other crops were for the women and children.

Those that were planted among other crops were not uprooted at the time of the harvest before the short rains, but were merely cut down near the ground. Thus treated, the stems gave forth a new mass of foliage with the beginning of the short rains, and this foliage was used as spinach. Allowing a second growth of foliage to grow was not done to get a second crop of beans, but simply for the sake of the green food. If a second crop developed it was called *mũcoka*, but this was never used for seed, only for food.

Njũgũ (*Pigeon or Bush Pea*)

This was also a woman's crop, and was planted in the same way as maize. Pigeon peas were planted only during the short rains, and were a slow growing crop which did not come into bearing until the long rains, being harvested at the same time as the main *njahĩ* crop. The bushes were not pulled up after the first harvest, but simply pruned by breaking off the ends of all the branches. A second crop then flowered with the succeeding short rains, a whole year after planting, and this second crop was harvested with the bulrush millet at the end of that rainy season.

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Thoroko (*Cowpea*)

This was a woman's crop, and was planted like maize. It was planted like maize during the long rains, and never in the short rains. Some self-sown plants always came up in the short rainy season, but the leaves of these were used for spinach, as they would not be able to produce mature beans during the short rainy season.

Ngĩna (*Green Gram*)

Green gram was treated in exactly the same way as *thoroko*, except that the leaves were no good for spinach, so any self-sown plants that grew up during the short rains were uprooted.

Mboco (*Kidney Bean*)

The several varieties of kidney bean (sown like maize) were woman's crops, and like maize, were always planted among the other mixed crops. They were a quickly maturing crop that provided food for the people during the time of shortage before the main crops were ready for harvest. Kidney beans were planted during both the long and the short rains, as soon as the rains started. They were often planted simultaneously with the maize, but never before it.

Ndũma, also called Mweũ (*Edible Arum*)

The edible arum was planted by either women or men, though its cultivation was mainly carried out by men. The place chosen for planting depended upon the region. In the higher altitudes, such as Limuru and Kijabe, edible arums were planted almost exclusively on the tops of the ridges in the rich leaf mould near the forest fringes. At lower altitudes they were grown in alluvial soil in the valleys.

When the arum roots were dug up for food, the leaves and stem were cut off with a small bit of root attached. These were placed in damp soil near a stream until they had taken root and a sufficient number were accumulated for planting out a new patch. Small holes, about 8in. deep, were dug with a digging knife and the cuttings were planted in them. From the time of planting, it was usually about 10 (p.183) months before the roots were swollen enough to eat. All the varieties of edible arum were treated in the same way.

Kĩgwa (*Sugar-cane*)

Sugar-cane was essentially a man's crop, though women were allowed to help their husbands plant the cuttings. Sugar-cane was grown exclusively in the valley bottoms near the streams and swamps, for although it would grow quite well on higher ground, the canes from higher ground produced less juice, and it was only for the sake of the juice that canes were grown. Sugar-cane juice was used for beer making, and certain types of black alluvial soil were regarded as producing the best quality juice for this purpose.

Propagation was by cuttings. When canes were cut for beer making all the top ends were lopped off and clipped. These cuttings (*mbeũ*) were soaked in the mud by the edge of a stream for a day or two, and then planted. They were set at an angle of about 65°, and each one became the centre of a new stool of canes producing anything from 10 to 30 fresh canes. Sugar-cane cuttings were planted 6-8ft. apart so as to leave room for the stools to develop and for a man to pass between the plants when examining his crop. There was no special season for planting sugar-cane in the swampier plots, but on drier plots they were planted during rains. Canes were not ready for harvesting till about 18 months after having been planted.

Irigũ (*Banana*)

All the varieties of banana were planted and looked after solely by men, although women could help in carrying the young banana shoots to the plot chosen for a new banana grove. Bananas were chiefly planted either on low lying ground near streams, or else in the rich soil of an old homestead site, but they would grow almost anywhere.

The method of propagation was to dig up a number of young banana suckers, called *mori* (literally, heifers), and lop off their tops about 4ft. from the base. The shoots selected for planting were always those that had diameter of about 4-6in. at the base and, before cutting, had been about 6ft. tall. The leafy part of each *mori* was lopped off by a single cut at an angle. These cuttings were set vertically in the holes about 1ft. deep. Then handfuls of damp soil were carefully plastered all over to coat their tops where they had been cut off at an angle. (p.184) This prevented the sap rising and flowing out before the "pores" of their wounds had had time to close.

After a day or two a fresh leaf started to thrust its way up through the centre of each stem and push off the earth cap, but by this time the wounds would have closed and the rising sap could not flow out and cause the plants to die. Banana cuttings were always planted far apart, 30 to 50ft. leaving room in the early stages of the development of the plantation for other crops, such as maize and

sweet potatoes, to be planted among them. Later on, when these cuttings had become the centre of big stools of 20 or 30 stems, the surrounding area was so shaded that nothing else would grow except a little maize.

Mũgwacĩ or mwanga (*Cassava*)

In the days before the coming of the white man, cassava was not grown by the Kikuyu for food, but rather for its medicinal and magical properties, and it was not by any means a universal crop, although it was grown here and there, especially by medicine-men (*andũ ago*)**.** It was planted by men from cuttings and it was used, among other things, as feed for a cow that was not yielding milk properly, and by medicine-men to make the magical powder called *kĩnoria*. For details of these and other uses see Chapter 26.

Mũbarĩki (*Castor Oil*)

Castor oil was planted from seed by the women, and any self-sown plant was also carefully tended. The seeds were sown in the same way as maize, and self-sown seedlings were dug up and replanted at some suitable spot in the gardens. A castor oil bush, once established, went on yielding a crop of seed for many years.

Mbakĩ (*Tobacco*)

Tobacco was planted only by men, and before planting a big crop a man planted one or two plants in different parts of his land, and harvested the leaves to see which soil was giving the best flavoured tobacco. Having found a patch of soil that yielded leaves with a flavour which he liked, he set that plot aside for tobacco planting.

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To propagate tobacco, a man cut off the stems of plants that had flowered and gone to seed. He kept the seed pods until they were quite dry, and then shook the ripe pods over a small patch of ground that had been prepared as a seed bed, and had had wood ash mixed with the soil. When the seedlings were about 6in. high they were planted in lines (*ndiriho*).

A man sometimes left one or two plants to go to seed and allowed the seed in them to fall to the ground and become self-sown. He then planted these self-sown seedlings, but this was not regarded as so satisfactory as having a seed bed prepared with wood ash.

Rũũngũ (*Gourd Plant*)

These plants were regarded as a man's crop, and both the planting and tending of them was carried out by men, although, for luck, a man could give the seeds to a little boy or a little girl to plant for him. No girl who had reached puberty, nor any woman, could go near these plants without defiling them. Similarly, a man who had recently eaten ox or cow meat had to avoid the gourd plants. The most favoured sites for planting gourds were on an old midden, or in the rich soil of an old homestead site.

Ihũithia Rĩerũ (*Kalanchoe marmorata*)

This was planted by men from cuttings, and it served not only to provide certain herbal drugs for liver trouble, poultices, etc. (see Chapter 21), but provided water for washing the hands after working in the gardens. A few fleshy leaves of *ihũithia*, if warmed by a fire and then rubbed, yielded enough liquid to wash the hands and get them clean, and so saved a trip down to the river to wash after working in the garden.

Nyeki ya Kĩgũtũ (*Thatching Grass—Sporolobus fimbriatus*)

This tall grass, which was particularly good for thatching purposes, was extensively planted by Kikuyu women and was generally used to mark boundaries of one woman's strip of garden from that of her co-wife or her husband's mother. It was also used to mark plot boundaries as distinct from field boundaries. It was propagated by dividing (p.186) a big plant into a number of rooted cuttings, which, when planted, grew into big stools of grass.

Mũhukũũra (*Mondia whitei*)

This plant was grown by men for sale to the Maasai, and it was also much cultivated by medicine-men for making magic powders. The method of propagation was to set a piece of root in the ground in a shallow trench, where it would shoot up and send out long vines which were trained up sticks like peas.

Ng'ondu ya Kiondo (*Notonia petraea*)

This was planted by men in their gardens so as to be available at short notice for purification ceremonies.

Weeding

Once the work of planting the crops was over, the task of weeding became urgent, for as soon as the rains started, all the fields where the soil had been tilled ready for planting invariably grew a big crop of weeds. This first weeding was so important that everyone—men, women, girls, and children—shared in the work, and even the warriors were expected to take part, because if the weeds were not eradicated soon after they sprouted, they would quickly choke the crop seedlings, and the whole community would lose its food supply. This weeding (*kũrĩmĩra*) was often done on a communal system, a large body of people working a set of fields belonging to one homestead one day, and all going to those of another homestead on the next day, and so on.

Apart from this first weeding at the beginning of each new season, the ordinary weeding was carried out continuously by the women, as far as their own plots were concerned, while the men were responsible for weeding the sugar-cane fields in the valleys. While weeding, the women also, if necessary, thinned out the seedlings and generally tended the crops which were in their charge, while the men looked after the yams, banana trees, and other man's crops. The yam vines and their supports had to be pruned (*gũcehwo*) from time to time, while the banana groves needed a lot of attention. Banana trees coming (p.187) into bearing had to be propped with special props called *itugĩ cia marigũ*, so that they should not break under the weight of the bunch which was forming, and dead leaves and dead bark had to be cut away and piled round the base of the trees to make a damp vegetable manure.

Weeds

The principal weeds recognised by the Kikuyu were *mũcege* (black jack—*Bidens pilosa*), *mũkengeria* (*Commelina benghalensis et al*), *togotia* (*Erucastrum arabicum*), *itindiĩ* (bristly foxtail, sometimes called love grass—*Setaria verticillata*), *terere* (*Amaranthus lividus et al*)., *gatumia* (*Portulacca* spp), *kamũgĩrĩ* (Conyza sp)., *managu* (Solarium nigrum), *gĩthũnga* (*Launaea cornuta*), *kĩhiũ* (*Lactuca* sp. *et al*)., *mũnyũgũnyũgũ* or *mũnyũgũ* (*Crassocephalum montuosum*), *thangari* (blue couch grass—*Digitaria scalarum* and *D. abyssinica*), *numa* (clover—*Trifolium* spp)., *cong'e* (double thorn—*Oxygonum sinuatum*), and *ngonda* (*Digitaria gazensis*).

Crop Protection

Another big task was the protection of the growing crops from the depredations of animals, and later, during the harvest season, of birds. In those parts of Kikuyu country which were nearest to the forest fringes, buffalo, eland, bongo, and wild pig were a serious menace, and it was necessary to drive these animals off. This task was essentially the work of warriors, helped by the older uninitiated boys, who spent the day in the fields and who commonly built a shelter (*gĩthũnũ*) near the crops in which to sleep. This was sometimes built of poles and roofed over with brushwood, but if a *mũthagurũ* (*mũtanda-ngogo*) bush was available, this was improvised into a shelter, for its natural growth lent itself to such an adaptation particularly well. In addition to the shelter, the warriors usually built a platform (*rũtara*) up in a big tree overlooking the fields, and one or two of them would sit in this during the early part of the night when the game was most likely to come into the fields. Here they had wooden boards (*ihengere*), which they beat with their clubs, and this noise was enough to scare off most game. If animals such as buffalo or pig became determined in their attack upon the fields, they were trapped (see Chapter 12). In those areas (p.188) that were farther from the forest fringes, wild animals were scarce, and there was no need to guard the fields at night, except with a few traps for animals like porcupine.

By day, those fields which were near the forest areas were liable to be raided by monkeys and baboons, so they had to be guarded then as well as at night, and especially in the early morning.

In some parts of Kikuyu country, an underground hut, called *muungu* (plural *miungu*), was used, instead of a *gĩthũnũ*. A pit about 4ft. deep and 8ft. in diameter was dug on the edge of the fields, and this was roofed over with poles, leaving a small entrance. Brushwood was laid over the poles, and then soil, over which grass scattered. In these underground huts no fire ever needed to be lit, as they remained quite warm. They were used in conjunction with a tree platform.

When the cereal crops were nearly ready for harvest they had to be protected from birds by day. This task was allotted mainly to children and young people, and the crops that had to be protected most were bulrush, foxtail, and finger millet, and sorghum. A series of platforms were built in positions commanding the fields where these crops were growing, and the children sat on these armed with slings (*igũtha*), bull roarers (*iburuti*), and whips (*mĩcarica*) which could be cracked. They spent from dawn till dark shouting and scaring off the birds. This work of bird scaring was so important that, as we have seen, special rows of maize were often planted in the bulrush millet fields solely for the purpose of supplying food to the bird scarers.

Harvest Ceremonies

When a new season's crop of cereals and beans was well advanced, and the first of the *mboco* (kidney beans) of the season were about to be picked and the maize was in full flower, it was customary for the elders of every village to get together and slaughter a *mbũri ya kũnyua mwere* (literally, a sheep for drinking the bulrush millet), which had to be a ram or a ewe. It was not taken to the sacred tree of the territorial unit (*rũgongo*), and was not a sacrifice so much as an animal slaughtered for purification of the crop. It was slaughtered at the foot of one of the sacred trees of the *mbarĩ* (sub-clan) that owned the estate, and the ceremony was conducted by the head of the sub-clan together with two or more elders. Before being slaughtered, the ram was offered to God. No beer was used in this ceremony. Some of the stomach contents (*taatha*), however, were taken by each elder, wrapped in *mũthakwa* (p.189) leaves and scattered about the fields among the crops. The third chamber of the stomach (*karaguma*) of the animal was also divided into a number of strips, and each elder took several of these and put them here and there on maize and bean plants

as an indication that the crop had been *horohio* (freed from ritual uncleanness). Once this had been done, the season's crop was eaten without fear of sickness resulting.

Some of the beast's stomach contents were sprinkled into the granaries into which the food would be harvested, and into all the vessels that would be used in the harvesting process.

The annual harvesting of the bulrush millet crop was accompanied by a special ceremony of its own, for which a ram or a ewe was sacrificed in every homestead that had harvested a good crop of this corn. This was over and above the slaughter of the *mbũri ya kũnyua mwere*, which was a general harvest ceremony. These rams or ewes were slaughtered in order to purify and bless the new crop that was being brought into the village and that would be used for making gruel for all ceremonial and sacrificial purposes, for bulrush millet was essentially a ceremonial food.

The ram or ewe slaughtered for this purpose was killed and roasted in the courtyard of the homestead concerned, and some of its stomach contents were sprinkled into every vessel or article which would come into contact with the bulrush millet: the granaries, the grindstones, the cooking pots, the gruel gourds, and the store-room (*thegi*), where gruel would be stored after it was made. Some stomach contents were also put into all the vessels and cooking pots that would be used for making gruel.

The only other harvest ceremony was a harvest thanks offering made to God. Along the paths leading from the cultivated plots to each village, the elders erected miniature granaries, and as each woman came in with her first fruits of the season she put a small amount of each different crop into these granaries as an offering to God. No one could touch the food so consecrated, and it stayed there until the granaries rotted and the food within was eaten by birds, mice, and rats.

Harvesting

Mbembe (*Maize*)

A certain proportion of every maize crop was picked green for roasting, but the main crop was not harvested until it was quite dry and the (p.190) plants had began to wither. Then the harvesters passed through the field pulling the plants up by the roots and carrying them to certain points in the field where other people stripped the cobs from the stems and pulled off the outer sheaths encasing the cobs. The maize would then be loaded into big string bags (*ciondo*) for the women to carry home, but men never carried *ciondo*, so part of the crop was done up in the form of *manja* for the men to carry. This was done by merely turning back the sheaths instead of stripping them right off, and then tying the sheaths of two cobs together. After many pairs of cobs had been so fastened together, they were slung over a cord and tied into a big bundle. The cobs that had had the sheaths stripped off were put straight into the granaries when they were taken back to the homestead, but the *manja* were usually hung up under the eaves or on trees in the *thome* area, until the granaries were a little less full and there was room to store them. At every harvest a certain number of cobs were selected for seed for the ensuing planting season; these cobs were also tied up as *manja*, but were kept apart until needed. The piles of maize stalks in the fields were fired on the spot, and the ash spread over the ground as a fertiliser.

Mũhĩa (*Sorghum*)

Before the whole sorghum crop was ripe and ready for harvest, the women used to pick some of the nearly ripe heads to cook into a dish called *mũthũra* (see Chapter 8). The heads picked for this purpose were broken off, not cut with a knife. Later when the main crop was hard and dry, the ripe heads were cut off with a small knife, put into string bags, and carried back to the granaries, where

they were stored without threshing. When the whole crop had been harvested the plants were pulled from the ground, and the men came with their big digging sticks and uprooted those plants which could not be pulled up by hand. All were then burnt. Occasionally, instead of uprooting the plants, the stems were cut off and the roots left in the soil to sprout and produce another crop with the next rains, but this second crop was seldom very satisfactory, and did not give a big yield.

Mwere and Mũkombi (*Bulrush and Foxtail Millet*)

Bulrush millet was harvested by cutting off the ripe heads with a small knife. These were put into string bags and carried directly to the (p.191) granaries. Foxtail millet heads were not cut with a knife, but nipped off with the nails of the thumb and first finger. When the whole crop had been harvested, the straw was cut down with knives, laid on the ground in lines (*mĩconjo*), and left to rot, as it made particularly good manure when rotted down.

Ūgĩmbĩ (*Finger Millet*)

This crop was harvested slightly before it was dry, when the ears were just turning red. It was put straight into a granary in this damp and unripe state. Here the ears lay and grew musty on the surface, but this was desired, as the corn was then considered mature. When it had been stored for a month or two and had reached this state it was ready for use, and enough ears for one cooking of gruel would be taken out as required. No other grain could be stored in the same granary, as it would go bad from contact with the musty finger millet.

Njahĩ (*Lablab Bean*)

A proportion of every *njahĩ* crop was eaten before it was really ripe and hard, that is, the beans were picked and cooked while still green (*njũa*), as soon as they were really set. The rest of the crop was allowed to remain on the plants until the pods were quite hard and dry, when they were harvested and stored in the granary. These beans were shelled only as required for use, as the pods protected the beans from weevils. As we have already seen, the *njahĩ* plants also yielded a spinach crop, so most of the plants were not pulled up after the crop had been harvested, but merely pruned, so that they would go on growing and produce leaves for spinach during the next rainy season.

Thoroko, *Ngĩna*, *Njũgũ*, *Mboco* (*Cowpea*, *Green Gram*, *Pigeon Pea*, *and*. *Kidney Bean*)

These peas and beans were treated in exactly the same way as *njahĩ* beans as far as harvesting was concerned. The various types of bean that were classed as *mboco* were always picked as soon as they matured and before the bean pod started to harden. They were never stored, but picked in the garden as required, and brought straight home to be (p.192) cooked. Except for a few pods kept for seed, the bean crop never lasted until the main harvest, for it was eaten during the time other food was short, before the main crops were ready.

All the above were seasonal crops; next we must turn to root crops such as sweet potatoes, yams, and edible arum, which were perennial. None of these were ever stored, but were taken from the gardens as required.

Ngwacĩ (*Sweet Potato*)

Sweet potatoes were dug by women and uninitiated boys but never by initiated men. They were dug up only when required for immediate use. Once dug they did not keep well, but they would keep indefinitely in the ground. A sweet potato plant was not uprooted when the tubers were dug up. A hole was dug with a digging stick or knife by the roots of the plant and the tubers were examined. Those that were of reasonable size were removed and the others covered over again and

left to grow bigger. In addition to providing sweet potatoes, the sweet potato vines (*mĩrĩyo*) provided invaluable fodder for the goats and sheep during the dry season (see Chapter 7).

Ndũma (*Edible Arum*)

Edible arums were dug up as required, the whole plant being uprooted, the corms cut off, and the stem replanted as already described. Like sweet potatoes, once dug up these edible arums had to be cooked and eaten at once. They would not keep.

Gĩkwa (*Yam*)

Yams were dug up only by men, as it was taboo for women to attempt to do so, but women came to carry them home after the men had dug them up. Yams were dug up with a special digging stick (*mũro wa ikwa*) made of *mũgũcwa* or *mũrema-mũthũa* wood, or occasionally *mũhũgũ*. With this a man dug a large hole at the side of the yam plant and furthest from the supporting tree, so as to avoid injuring the support's roots. He then dug in under the plant and examined the tubers. If any were big enough to be taken he broke them off and left the hole open for a few days so that air could get into the base of the plant. Then the hole was filled in again and the plant left for some months before being (p.193) re-examined for more tubers. Every man kept a careful mental record of his yam plants and knew just which plants had been recently examined and which were due for examination.

In addition to the root crops mentioned above, two other perennial crops, bananas and sugar-cane, were collected as required and never stored.

Kĩgwa (*Sugar-cane*)

Sugar-cane was essentially a man's crop, grown primarily to provide the beer required for the innumerable ceremonies at which it was used in the ordinary social life of the Kikuyu people. The main sugar-cane crop was reserved for this purpose and was taken as required by the men. Every member of the family could, however, take a few canes for themselves, although it was a man's crop. Sugar-cane stems were never cut off at the base, but were pulled off with a jerk so as not to damage the plant. When a man wanted canes for beer making, he and a few others went down to the sugar-cane plot with some women, pulled the requisite number of canes, cut off the leafy tops, and quickly sliced off the outer bark. The women then collected the canes together into bundles and carried them up to the stamping place. The preparation of beer is dealt with in Chapter 8.

Irigũ (*Banana*)

Bananas were not only cut when ready for ripening and eating raw, but were also cut green for various purposes: roasting, boiling with maize and beans, and even for making flour from which to make gruel. These various uses of the banana will be elaborated in the chapter on foods, and they are mentioned only to explain the customs relating to banana cutting. Bananas were, as we have seen, a man's crop, planted by men, and it was the man who planted them who had the sole right to say which bunches could be cut green for cooking and which should be left until they were ready for ripening. On the other hand, although bananas were usually cut by men, there was no taboo against a woman doing so, and a man often directed his womenfolk to go out and cut a bunch for him or for their own cooking needs.

As we have seen, when a banana tree flowered, the man propped up the tree to prevent its being broken by the weight of the bunch. When a bunch was to be cut a man took away the prop and then (p.194) seized the "bell" or bud of the banana bunch in his left hand and pulled the bunch

down, at the same time cutting the stem with a gardening knife (*rũhiũ rũa mengere*) held in his right hand. He laid the bunch on the ground while he cut up the leaves and stem of the tree which had produced the bunch, and piled these round the base of the stool, for a banana tree never flowered more than once. Bananas cut for ripening purposes were not cut until the birds had begun to peck at the topmost bananas of the bunch, a sure sign that the bunch was ready to be ripened. The props that had been removed were set to prop some other tree that was in fruit.

Mũbarĩkĩ (*Castor Oil*)

Castor oil seeds were harvested by women and taken in their string bags to be stored under the granaries or under the eaves of huts. They were stored in their pods, and covered over with bracken so that when the pods "popped", the seeds would not scatter too far.

Nyeni (*Spinach*)

The leaves of the various plants that were used for spinach, both cultivated and wild, were always picked by women and never by men.

Ceremony to Restore Crops Damaged by Storm

In the event of standing crops being severely beaten down by rain accompanying a thunderstorm, the elders of the areas affected immediately slaughtered a ram or a ewe; this was called *ndũrũme ya gũtiira irio* (literally, a ram to prop up the crops). Such an animal was slaughtered at the foot of a *mũthakwa*, *mũkenia*, or *mũkeũ* tree, and it was eaten by the elders. Then the stomach contents and the *karaguma* (the third chamber of the stomach) were taken to the fields to purify the crops.

The Ceremonies for making the Crops Good

Sometimes it happened that after the rains had started and the crops had been planted, the rainfall would be inadequate for the needs of (p.195) the crops, and they would start to wither and die. In other cases the crops would be attacked by the caterpillars known as army worm (*ngũnga*) and famine would threaten. In such circumstances, there was no prayer for rain, because the rains had started and the trouble was not due to their failing. Instead of prayers for rain, therefore, a ceremony was performed to purify the crops by fire and magic, and to save the situation.

This ceremony was arranged as follows. The elders of the whole territorial unit (*rũgongo*) affected, met together and agreed that the situation was serious. They arranged to call for the help of a medicine-man belonging to the *Gathirimũ* sub-clan of the *Anjirũ* main clan, for the members of this sub-clan were specialists in magic for crops. The elders, having agreed on this procedure, made a collection (*mũhothi*) of a little grain and beans of every available kind (*mĩthemba yothe*) every family in the area contributing something. A message was sent to medicine-man selected, to inform him that a delegation was coming to him on such-and-such a day, and he prepared beer for them to drink on arrival. The delegation of elders took the grain and beans that had been collected, tied them up in bundles (*mburungo*), and presented them to him. Then the medicine-man asked what they had come for, and they replied that their territory was threatened with famine**,** that the crops were withering, and that they wished him to come and remove the evil. He then appointed a day when all the elders of the area concerned were to meet together and wait for him to come and perform the ceremony of purification on their behalf.

The elders went back home and arranged for every family concerned to provide a few sticks of sugar-cane. These were brought together to one place on the day before the medicine-man was due to come, and the canes were crushed and used to brew beer. This beer was consumed mainly by

the elders, but the contents of one large beer brewing gourd (*ndua*) was set aside "for the sacrifice" (*ya igongona*), and this sugar-cane beer was mixed with two hornfuls of honey brought by two of the senior elders. A ram was also obtained and kept in readiness for the coming of the medicine-man.

When he arrived, bringing with him his bag of magic powders, he went where the beer had been brewed and drank some of the beer mixed with honey, which was still in the large brewing gourd and not yet poured off into the *nyanja* and *gĩtete* gourds commonly used for beer that was ready to be drank. Then he called for the ram that had been selected, and if he considered it unsuitable for any reason he rejected it and asked for another, until he got one that he considered suitable. Then he asked the elders where the sacrifice was to take place, (p.196) and they said that they had chosen a suitable tree. The tree they chose was always one of the sub-clan sacred trees within the territory ,but never the territorial sacred tree, though it was, as near as possible in the centre of their territorial unit.

The elders and the medicine-man then went to this tree, taking the ram for sacrifice, the beer that had been mixed with honey, and so plain honey. The only elders who went thither were those who had been selected, about four from each village in the area; the other elders who had come to meet the medicine-man when he arrived remained behind and later went to their homes.

Having arrived at the sacred tree, the medicine-man took some of the beer in a horn and a gourd cup, and poured this out at the foot of the tree praying to God (*Ngai*) as he did so. There was no set prayer but the prayer was always to the same effect. "O God, I have been given this ram by the people so that I may make their crops flourish and not fail. You are the Father of all the Kikuyu, and it was You who gave my fathers before me, and myself, this special knowledge of magic for crops, so I come to You, God, to offer You the sheep that they have given to me and to ask You to bless my magic that it may give help to the people. Remove the plague. Give them good crops, give them more rain, let their cattle and sheep be fruitful and increase greatly, give them many children, and give them a good honey crop too." The medicine-man did not pray to God "in the sacred mountains," but only to God "at His temple," the tree.

Then the medicine-man, and the elder who was normally in charge of ceremonies at that particular tree and who had been standing beside him while he prayed, each drank some of the sacrificial beer after the first lot had been poured out to God. Next the medicine-man, holding the ram at the foot of the tree, prayed as before, offering God the ram and asking for his blessing on the magic he was about to make for the people's crops. After this the ram was suffocated by two men and the medicine-man stabbed (*ratha*-ed) it to draw off blood into a cup made from a big *mũthakwa* leaf. The remaining blood was caught in a half-gourd. He poured the blood in the leaf cup out at the foot of the tree saying, "*Iyũkia Ngai mũtĩ*" ('Accept, oh God, the tree'). The animal was then cut up by two elders and the breast cut off, and given to medicine-man, who laid it on one side, while the rest of the meat was roasted on a roasting platform to be eaten by those performing the sacrifice. The fire was made by means of fire sticks from the medicine-man's bag, and was started with wood from the sacred tree. The wood for the roasting platform was also taken from the sacred tree, as well as some leaves to put the meat on. Then all the elders present (p.197) and the medicine-man ate the meat, and the bones were split in half, but the marrow was not consumed, as it was for God. When the meat had been eaten, the wood of the roasting platform, the skewers, and all the bones were made into a big fire, to which the medicine-man added green leaves and branches of the following plants: *mũkũri*, *mũtaa*, *coco*, *mũtare*, *ũrutĩ*, *mũcingiri*, *mũkũyũ*, and *mũtei*. Every elder present had meanwhile been sent to ready a torch of *mũtei* wood, and into each of these torches

the medicine-man put some of his magic powders wrapped up in *mũthakwa* leaves. This magic powder was from the the gourds he carried, containing powders of *rũthuko*, *mũũnga*, *kĩnoria*, *thiari*, and *mũcanjamũko*.

A flowering stem of castor oil plant (*mũthandĩ wa mbarĩki*) was put on the fire, and from it, as evening approached, and it began to get dark, each torch was lit. While the fire was burning, and before the torches were lit, the medicine-man placed the breast of the sacrificial ram and the raw honey at the foot of the tree, saying, "*Nĩtwamũhoya indo, na twamũhe nyama na ũũkĩ ũyũ mwĩrugagĩre*". ('We ask you for things, and we give you meat and this honey that you may cook them for yourselves.'). This prayer, addressed to "people" in the plural, was not to God at all, and it was not to ancestral spirits in the ordinary sense, but rather to the leaders and workers of magic of the past (*athamaki* and *ago a tene*), who were with God and who were quite distinct from the ordinary ancestral spirits (*ngoma*) who had no powers over rain and crops.

Then the medicine-man told the elders to select the men from among themselves to carry the torches through the countryside. Eight were selected and given the lighted torches; four of them set off over the territory down stream (*itherero*) of the sacred tree, and four upstream (*rũgũrũ*). With their torches the men fired the piles of weeds in the fields, and dry brushwood that they found in clearings where new fields were being prepared. They did not have to light a fire in every field and garden, but rather, in occasional fields, all over the territory concerned, so that at night the smoke of these fires, and the magic of the powders that had been put into the torches, covered the whole territory. In the outlying areas of the territory concerned, bands of warriors had been told to wait, and they took over the torches from the elders and carried the fire through the night, so that fires were kindled in the fields and gardens over the whole of the area concerned. When the medicine-man and the elders had completed their task they went home.

The next day was a "day of absenting oneself because of the magical medicine" (*mũtĩro wa mũthaiga*). No one might go to work in the fields until the following day, when normal life was resumed. On the day (p.198) following the lighting of the fires no one might leave the territory concerned and cross the streams that divided one territory from the other, and no one might come in from the adjoining territories. The magic fire was not taken to any huts or homesteads. If any man presumed to do so, he would be fined an ox for slaughter to remove the evil he had caused. If the medicine-man heard of his action, such man would also be cursed till he and his family died or became poor.

In periods when the crops were bad, the medicine-man who specialised in crop magic was called out again and again to different territorial units until every one of them had been treated as described, but the ceremonies did not all take place on the same day, or even on consecutive days.

In the Kiambu and Kabete area, the special "crops magician" always called upon during the close of the last century was Njaũ wa Kaboca, while in the Ting'ang'a area a man called Kamau wa Kanja was the specialist of greatest repute.

The Ceremony of Purifying Women after a Bad Crop Season

If the normal rains failed during any one season, and the current crop failed as a consequence, a ceremony took place at the beginning of the next rainy season so as to prevent a further failure. This ceremony was not a rain-making ceremony, which was quite a different thing, but a ceremony of purification for the women who would plant the new crop. The ceremony was called *kuohora*

aka ('to untie or release the women' from any accidental ritual uncleanness that might have caused the trouble).

The elders of the tribe over the whole country gave orders that when the rains started no one was to go out and plant at all, but that they were to wait for the ceremony to take place. Then the elders of ruling generation and those who were the owners of the land (*ene thĩ*) in each *mwaki*, territorial division, met together and appointed a day for the sacrifice of a ram or a ewe at their sacred tree (*mũgumo wa Ngai*). The sacrificial animal had to be a ram or a ewe, and not a goat, for a goat was no good for this sacrifice to God. When the elders went to the sacred tree, the presence of the senior members the family owning the estate on which the tree stood was essential. Unless they were members of the ruling generation, however, they could not (p.199) take part in the actual prayers. A medicine-man of the territorial unit had to be present to provide certain magic powders, and the elders had to bring with them a stick of sugar-cane, a banana leaf, a little clean water from the nearest stream, some *mahoroha* stems and leaves, and some honey.

While still alive, the animal to be slaughtered was held up to face the tree, and prayers were said as the animal was offered to God. The animal was then suffocated and its blood drawn off in a half-gourd and poured out at the foot of the tree by the two senior elders of the ruling generation. This was called *gũkura* (an act of purification), and at the same time further prayers were offered.

The banana leaf was made into a basin, in which the water and honey were now mixed. Then the medicine-man and the senior elder each chewed sugar-cane, spitting the juices out into the basin. The medicine-man put into the basin powders of the following varieties: *mũcanjamũka*, *ũũmũ*, *rũthuko*, and *kĩnoria*. The whole mixture was applied to the skin of the animal, which had been removed from the carcass while the mixture was being prepared.

Sometimes, instead of mixing the powders in with the water, honey, and sugar juice, the powders were sprinkled dry onto the skin and two elders took mouthfuls of the mixture and sprayed it over the skin. The skin, having been thus treated, was cut up into a large number of strips (*ngwaro*), each of which was slit in the centre, and each man present put one of these over his right wrist. He then took enough other strips to put on all the women and girls of his village. While the skin was being cut up, two senior elders took the outer breast of the animal (*gĩthũri kĩerũ*), and laid it at the foot of the sacred tree as an offering to God. At the same time they prayed for a good rainy season, a favourable planting of seed, and good crops.

Meanwhile, other elders cut a number of sticks of *mũthakwa*. These were dipped into the undigested stomach contents (*taatha*) of the sacrificial animal and each man present, took one of the sticks to his village.

The inner part of the breast of the ram (*gĩthũri kĩirũ*) was then eaten by the senior members of the family owning the estate on which the sacred tree was situated, and by one senior elder representing the non-landowning people (*athami*) living on the estate. The rest of the meat was eaten by all the elders present, except for the eyes, gall bladder, and urinary bladder. These remaining parts were put at the foot of tree with the stomach contents, the sticks that had formed the roasting platform, and the bones.

The animal, when slaughtered, was cut up on a layer of *mũgumo* and *mũthakwa* leaves, the former having been picked from the sacred (p.200) tree. The fire, too, was kindled with dry wood from the sacred tree, and this sacrificial fire was lit with fire sticks or with embers from a garden fire.

When the ceremony was over, each elder took one of the *mũthakwa* sticks that had been cut and dipped into the stomach contents, enough rawhide strips for all the women of his village, and a few *mahoroha* leaves which had been rubbed over with the stomach contents and took these home with him. When he arrived at his village he gave the women the *mahoroha* leaves to use for ceremonially sweeping out their beds These leaves were then put at the head end of the women's bedrooms. Each woman and adult girl was given a strip of rawhide to put on her left arm above the elbow, and the senior woman of the village was given the *mũthakwa* stick.

Early next morning all the senior women had to go out with these sticks and use them as digging knives to plant the first few seeds of the new planting season. Then they came home and put the *mũthakwa* sticks on their beds, and all the other women and girls could go *out* and start planting in the normal way, except that they had to be wearing the strip of rawhide on their left arms above the elbow.

Rain-making Ceremonies

In connection with rain-making, it is necessary to differentiate between the power to make rain fall on special areas, as practised by the members of the clan called *Aithaga* (*Ethaga*), and the ceremony for asking God for general rain, as performed by the Kikuyu as a whole.

In the case of the complete failure of the rains, making it impossible for the people as a whole to plant their crops, there was no thought of going to ask the *Aithaga* clan to make rain, nor was there any thought of going to a medicine-man or magician to ask him to make rain, for the power to give and to withhold the whole of the rainy season belonged to the supreme being, God, and not to any individual person, or to any clan or family. A plea for rain in this case, therefore, could be directed only to God.

When it became obvious that the normal month for the rainy season to start had passed and the rains had been withheld, the elders of every territorial unit (*rũgongo*) got together to offer sacrifices and make prayers for rain. Messages were sent from one territorial unit to those that bordered it, saying, "We are preparing for a sacrifice to pray for rain; do likewise", so gradually preparations were made all over the (p.201) country. On the day appointed by the elders of each territorial unit, the senior elders belonging to the generation that was in power, met together to offer sacrifice and prayer, all over the country on that day, or the days immediately preceding and following it; the same ceremony was being performed by the elders of each of the territorial units.

A ram of one single colour—black, white, or brown—was bought with lambs provided by various elders of the ruling generation. No person, however senior, could contribute to the price of this special ram unless he was a member of the ruling generation. This ram of a single colour was taken by the elders to the sacred tree of their generation in that area. This was always a *mũgumo*, and it was always the tree that the generation, on coming into power, had chosen as their temple in that area. The elders took to their sacred tree the ram, a big half-gourd and a small cooking pot. Sometimes honey beer was offered as well. Once at the tree, four senior elders usually held the ram, though in some parts of the country nine elders officiated. The rest of the elders sat down in a circle nearby. The elders holding the live ram addressed God, facing first towards Mount Kenya, and saying, "God, You who made the mountain Kĩrĩmaara, You who gave the Kikuyu their land to live in, You who gave us children, have mercy upon us and give us rain. We have brought this ram to You as an offering and we pray for rain". The words of the prayer were extempore, and not in any set formula.

They then faced Donyo Sabuk (Kĩanjahĩ) and they again addressed God there and prayed to Him. Then they turned to the Aberdare Range (Nyandarũa) and addressed God there in the same terms, and finally they addressed Him facing the Ngong Hills (Kĩambĩrũirũ).

The ram was then slaughtered by suffocation at the foot of the tree, and the blood drained off ceremonially into a big-gourd. The four officiating elders stood, one holding the gourd of blood in both hands, and the others holding on to him by his clothes or his arms so as to associate themselves with him. One of them prayed again to God in the same general terms, facing each of the four mountains in turn, after which the blood was poured out at the foot of the tree on two sides, east and west, where the sun rises and where it sets.

Next the whole of the outer layer of the breast (*gĩthũri kĩerũ*) was cut to be offered to God presently, and the animal was skinned and cut up in the usual ceremonial manner. Meanwhile, the fat of the tail, and off the back of the sacrum and pelvis was rendered down in a pot brought for the purpose and poured into the half-gourd that had contained the blood. Two wisps of Kikuyu grass (*kĩgombe*) were brought, and one of the elders held the gourd and a (p.202) second took one of these wisps in each hand. The other two elders hung on to the first two by their clothes. Then, dipping the wisp which was in his right hand into the pot and facing Mount Kenya, the elder holding the wisp addressed God, offering him the fat, and sprinkling it with the wisps in the direction of Mount Kenya (Kĩrĩmaara) praying as he did so for male offspring (*ihĩĩ*), for rain, and for good crops. Then, dipping the wisp in his left hand into the fat and still facing Mount Kenya, he prayed for girl children (*ciana cia airĩtu*), for cattle and for sheep. Then the four elders faced in turn Donyo Sabuk, the Aberdare Range, and finally the Ngong Hills, always praying in the same way and sprinkling fat, first with the right hand and then with the left, praying for boys, rain, and crops with the right-hand offering, and girls, cattle, and sheep with the left-hand offering. Any fat remaining in the half-gourd was poured out at the foot of the tree to the north and south. All the elders then consumed the meat that had meanwhile been roasted over a fire on a roasting platform. The fire for roasting was not necessarily made with fire sticks for this ceremony, but could be made with embers from either a garden or a hut, for the meat for the elders had no ceremonial significance, the sacrificial offering having been the live animal, the blood, and the fat.

When the meat had all been eaten, the roasting platform, the skewers, the leaves, and the stomach contents were piled at the foot of the tree. All the senior elders took hold of the breast, and all the other elders present associated themselves with them by holding on to their cloaks and arms. They all jointly laid the breast up against the tree as a final offering to God, and this time they prayed for rain only, not mentioning crops, children, or cattle.

This done, all the elders moved to a spot some 100 or so yards away and sat down. Then the senior elder stood up, and holding a *mũthakwa* or *mũkeũ* branch in his hands, he recited the following litany, Which never varied and to which the response made by all the elders, was the same.

Senior Elder (standing): *Tondũ tũũkire kũhoya Ngai, mbura ĩroura*.
Since we have come to pray to God, may the rain pour down.
Response: *Thaai, thathaiya Ngai, thaai*.
Mercy, pray to God for mercy, mercy.
Senior Elder: *Tondũ tũũkire gũkĩhoya mbura ya kũguna ciana, ugai mbura iroura*.
Since we have come to beseech You for rain to sustain our children, say now may the rain pour down. (p.203)
Response: *Thaai, thathaiya Ngai, thaai*.
Mercy, pray to God for mercy, mercy.
Senior Elder: *Tondũ tũũkire gũkĩhoya irio cia mũgũnda, ugai mbura iroura*.

Since we have come to beseech You for the produce of the fields, say now may the rain pour down

Response: *Thaai, thathaiya Ngai, thaai*.

Mercy, pray to God for mercy, mercy.

Senior Elder: *Tondũ rĩu nĩtwainũka tũgakome na atumia aitũ tũciare, ugai ciana irociarũo*.

Since now we are going home to sleep with our wives, that we may beget children, say now may children be born.

Response: *Thaai, thathaiya Ngai, thaai*.

Mercy, pray to God for mercy, mercy.

Then another senior elder stood up in his place and the same litany was repeated all over again, and sometimes yet a third elder did so before they went home.

No man who was present at the tree during this sacrifice and prayer was allowed to have intercourse with his wife until at least four days had elapsed, and he then had to purify and wash himself before he did so. The reference in the litany to the begetting of children did not refer specifically to the men who were chanting the litany or responding to it, but to their people as a whole.

On the morning after the day of the sacrifice, the senior wives of all the elders of the ruling generation assembled at a distance from the tree and proceeded together, with offerings of grain, to the sacred tree. Having laid the offerings at the foot of the tree, they did not make prayers to the deity at the tree, but broke simultaneously into the *ngemi* ululation, breaking at intervals as one woman called out, "*Iĩ Ngai nĩtwagũthembera*. *Tũhe mbura, na ũtũhe irio, na tũciarage wega*. ('Oh, God, Father, we have made our offerings to You. Give us rain, give us food, and permit us to be very fruitful and bear children').

Then they went homewards in small parties to the various villages from which they had come, ululating and continuing to pray as they went. In every village of the territory the elders prepared for local sacrifices for the ceremony of *kuohora aka* (see above).

The Kikuyu say that after a sacrifice to God had been made in this way in every territorial unit in the space of two or three days, rain never failed to be granted to them.

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Locust Infestations

After a locust infestation, when the locusts had passed on, the members of every village sacrificed a small ram for a purification ceremony (*kũhaata ngigĩ*—to sweep away the locusts), and the stomach contents of this ram were sprinkled all over the gardens where the locusts had eaten the crops.

Customs and Taboos Connected with Agriculture

Some people used to protect their crops from thieves by calling in the aid of either a blacksmith (*mũturi*) or of a member of the *Aĩthaga* (*Ethaga*) clan. If a blacksmith was called in to protect a garden from thieves, he brought with him an old clay bellows nozzle (*ngerũa*). This he set up on a pole in the middle of the patch to be protected, at the same time calling out loudly that he had put a spell upon the garden and anyone eating food stolen from it would die. News of this ceremony spread quickly and no one, however hungry, would dare to steal from it. In particular this method of protection was adopted for protecting sugar-cane fields, since they were not visited regularly by the owners, and so were more likely to be robbed than the other fields.

Members of the *Aĩthaga* (*Ethaga*) clan used a form of witchcraft or *ũrogi* (in which they were specialists), and this will be dealt with in the appropriate chapter. Witchcraft used like this for the benefit of the community was not punishable, whereas the penalty for anti-social witchcraft was death.

There were a certain number of taboos connected with agriculture and agricultural methods, some of which have already been mentioned. In addition to these there were the following specific taboos:

1. When a man worked in the garden or fields of a relative-in-law he had to wear his ordinary skin cloak, however inconvenient it was to work in, and could not adopt a kilt of banana leaves (*macoya*) that he would normally wear when working in his own fields.

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2. A girl or woman working in the fields of a relation-in-law had to lay aside her cloak and work bare to the waist as she would in her own fields.

3. An elderly man working in his own garden could wear an *ithitĩri* instead of a banana leaf kilt. This consisted of two bunches of leaves, one over his buttocks and anus and one over his genitals.

4 A bunch of bananas that fell down of its own accord or was blown down by wind could not be eaten by any of the family owning that banana grove, but had to be given to some other family.

5. It was taboo to allow any sugar-cane plant to come into flower (*gũciara mbũĩ*). If a plant so flowered, a very old man not related to the owner of the field had to be brought in to dig up the whole of the stool of canes by the roots. A ram was then killed on the spot where the plant had flowered and its stomach contents sprinkled over the hole where the cane had been uprooted. A *mũkenia* and a *mũthakwa* plant had to be planted in the hole "to take the place of that sugar-cane plant" (*coka ithenya rĩa kĩgwa kĩu*). The canes so uprooted were taken by the old man who had dug them up, and he made beer from them, but the owner of the field and his relations could not touch a drop of that beer without endangering themselves.

6. It was strictly taboo to cut down a banana tree in anger or slash it in any way. Doing so necessitated the sacrifice of a ram, and the whole stool so damaged had to be dug up and *mũthakwa* and *mũkenia* plants planted in its place. The further details of sacrifice and purification involved in this case and in the case of the sugar-cane which flowered will be found in Chapter 28.

7. If any man beat his wife or any other woman in a garden or cultivated field, and drew blood, a purification ceremony with sacrifice had to take place on the spot where the beating took place, as the garden had been thereby defiled.

8. If any married women threw soil at each other in the fields, they could be purified only by the sacrifice of a ram, and by ceremonial sexual intercourse performed by a man other than their husband.

9. A man or woman wearing a charm (*gĩthĩtũ kĩa thaahu*) could not pass under a banana prop because, if they did so, the charm would lose its powers.

10. If a man or woman died suddenly in a cultivated area, the (p.206) body was left there for the hyenas to drag away. Then the spot where the body had been was marked off with sticks, and the food plants in the marked off area were not harvested. In all future seasons nothing would be planted there, and the spot would be used as a rubbish dump.

11. There was no taboo against a menstruating woman working in her gardens, or picking sweet potato vine for the goats and sheep, but she could not hang up the bunch of vine in the courtyard when she had taken it there, and she could not *kia* that is, make gruel from bulrush millet or other grains that she had fetched from the fields.

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Introduction

Although, as we have pointed out in chapters on Agriculture, the Kikuyu were mainly dependent upon plants for their food supply, domestic animals were of the most vital importance to the social organization and religious life of the community. We have already noted a number of circumstances in which the slaughter of a goat or a sheep was required by law and custom, and in the chapters on the social life and religion of the people we shall come upon a large number of other instances where possession of goats and sheep was essential.

It is therefore hardly surprising that the Kikuyu laid a great store by their flocks, and to some extent estimated a man's wealth and social standing in terms of the number of goats and sheep he possessed. At the same time, nothing could be more erroneous than to regard the possession of goats and sheep simply as a form of investment that could be replaced in modern times by a bank book or by a hoard of silver coins, for these could never take the place of stock in the ceremonial life and social organisation of the people.

In addition to their use on ceremonial and religious occasions, cattle, goats, and sheep were required to supply the raw materials for many of the objects of material culture used by the Kikuyu, so that they were of definite economic as well as social and religious value. For all these reasons, the Kikuyu expended a great deal of time, trouble, and thought upon the care of their stock.

Apart from cattle, goats, and sheep, the Kikuyu, as a general rule, kept only one other form of livestock, namely bees, and we shall consider beekeeping in the concluding part of this chapter.

A few people here and there kept fowls which they had obtained from the Akamba, and a few had dogs obtained from Ndorobo hunters, but these were kept not for utilitarian purposes so much as for use in magic, for it was believed that the ceremony of oath taking (*kũringa thenge*) was much more potent if performed with a fowl or a dog instead of a goat. This ceremony will be discussed in the chapter dealing with Law and Justice (Chapter 23).

Although the Kikuyu kept cattle, as well as goats and sheep, it was the last two that were considered the most important in social and religious life, although cattle were regarded as more important in (p.208) economic life as an index of social status. We will therefore first of all consider goats and sheep, as having been at once the most important and the most universally owned animals of the Kikuyu.

Goats and Sheep

Terms and Colouring

Goats and sheep were collectively termed *mbũri*, but when it was necessary to differentiate between them, *mbũri* was used as a general term for goats, and *ng'ondu* for sheep. However, there were specific names used for the different sexes and states of both goats and sheep, and these were in constant use. Thus the general term for an adult he-goat was *thenge*, an uncastrated one being described as a *thenge ya njamba*, and a castrated one as *thenge hakũre*. A young he-goat not yet sexually mature was called *kĩrũhĩ*. A female goat that had not yet borne a kid was called *harika*. A young kid was called *kori*, while a new born kid was *kori ga itumbi*. With sheep, an adult ram that was running with the ewes was *ndũrũme*, but one that was being fattened for slaughter was called *ndũrũme ya gĩcegũ*. (Rams were never castrated by the Kikuyu, and when they were to be fattened they were simply segregated from the ewes and stall-fed). A young ram that was not yet sexually

mature was *gatũrũme*, while a ewe that had not yet borne a lamb was called *mwatĩ*, and other ewes were *ng'ondu*. A lamb was *kagondu*.

In addition to these distinctive terms to describe goats and sheep of different sexes and conditions, the Kikuyu had many words that were descriptive either of the colour of the animals, or of some peculiarity, just as the English have special words to denote the colours of horses, such as chestnut, roan, bay, piebald, skewbald, etc. As far as sheep were concerned, the following were the Kikuyu names used to describe these differences. One column shows the term for ewes, and the second the term for the corresponding rams.

Kikuyu names for sheep

Ewes	Rams	
Mbirũ	*Kĩbirũ*	Dark blackish-brown
Njerũ	*Gĩcerũ*	All white
Mũkũyũ	*Kĩmũkũyũ*	Uniform brown colour p.209
Rumbĩ	*Kĩrumbĩ*	Light-brown
Njuuru	*Gĩcuuru*	Naturally short ears
Mũkũyũ wa thonjo	*Kĩmũkũyũ gĩa thonjo*	Brown colour with white spots
Mbara	*Kĩbara*	Spotted like a leopard
Njagatha	*Gĩcagatha*	Two little appendages at the neck
Mbũra	*Kĩbũra*	Short ears
Rũkuuyo	*Kĩrũkuuyo*	White underneath
Mũromo mũirũ	*Kĩromo kĩirũ*	Black lips

As to the goats, an even greater number of distinctions were recognized, and the list is as follows, the terms being, again, for females and males respectively.

Kikuyu names for goats

She-goats	He-goats	
Mbuu	*Kĩbuu*	Ashen grey
Njerũ	*Gĩcerũ*	All white
Njũgũ	*Gĩcũgũ*	Closely spotted brown and white
Huria	*Kĩhuria*	Dirty-brown
Ngooto	*Kĩgooto*	Dun colour with black lateral markings on the face
Maara	*Kĩmaara*	Spotted or blotched
Maara hiti	*Kĩmaara hiti*	Spotted like a hyena
Maara ya ndũiga	*Kĩmaara kĩa ndũiga*	Spotted like a giraffe
Ndune	*Gĩtune*	Reddish colour
Njirũ	*Kĩbogo*	All black
Ūũmũ	*Kĩũmũ*	Forequarters lighter than the back quarters
Rũnyaga	*Kĩnyaga*	White patches on the body, but not on the face
Njuuru	*Gĩcuuru*	Naturally short ears

Nganga	*Gĩkanga*	Spotted like a guinea fowl
Njũgũ ya thiringe	*Gĩcũgũ gĩa thiringe*	Very thickly spotted
Thũriũ	*Gĩthũriũ*	Black above and white below
Ngondi	*Gĩkondi*	Colour of a hartebeeste
Rũnyarũ	(none)	Black and white patches
Mũrungu	*Kĩrungu*	Hornless
Kareru	*Kareru*	Bearded
Kĩburi	*Kĩburi*	Long mane

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Herding and Grazing

Goats and sheep were always housed at night inside one of the huts of the homestead to which they belonged, some in the area reserved for the (*kwerũ*) in the women's huts, and some in the men's hut, while the animals that were being fattened for slaughter were kept in the specially constructed stalls (*icegũ*) inside the women's huts. Every morning the animals were let out into the courtyard soon after it was light, except those that were being fattened; they were kept in the courtyard until the sun had been up long enough to dry the dew on the grass and bushes, for it was considered unhealthy for the animals to go out and graze while the dew still lay on the leaves. The eating of dew-wet leaves was supposed to cause stomach trouble. In rainy weather it was impossible to keep the flock in all day, so they were allowed to go out, but rain-wet grass was not believed to be as harmful as dew-wet grass.

In the old days only he-goats were provided with goat bells, which served a double purpose. When feeding in fairly thick bush, these bells made enough noise to keep off leopards and wild animals. Moreover, as every man knew the tone of his own bells, he could tell the whereabouts of his flock from a distance. The only time that a female goat given a bell was if she got in the habit of making for cultivated land and eating the crops growing there; the bell then made it easier for the herdsman to keep a watch on her movements.

Whereas the main body of the flocks were always taken out to graze, any lame or very thin and sickly animal was normally kept in the courtyard all day and fed with sweet potato vine, and occasionally *mahũrũra* (bindweed) fodder. All the smaller lambs and kids, too, were kept in the courtyard, being herded together into the men's hut while the flocks were being driven off, and then let loose to spend the day in the courtyard and round about the homestead until the flocks returned at night. They too, were fed with sweet potato vine, specially picked for them.

If a man's flock was a very large one, then it was herded by itself but more often the flocks from two or three homesteads were sent out to graze together. This was called *gũturanĩra ndũru*. When a Kikuyu spoke of my flock, he did not necessarily imply that the animals in the flock represented the total that he owned, or that all of them were his, for this was seldom, if ever, the case, owing to the Kikuyu custom of boarding animals out (*kũhithia*). By this custom a man would place (p.211) the number of his animals with different friends, giving them full responsibility for them in every way. By so doing, he avoided having "all his eggs in one basket". In connection with this practice, it should be noted that it was not on a reciprocal basis. That is to say, if A gave some of his animals to each of B, C, and D, to look after, neither B, C, nor D could by custom *hithia* with A. They could, however, *hithia* with X or Y, who in turn might *hithia* with A.

A man who accepted the responsibility of looking after animals belonging to someone else was entitled to every eleventh animal born to the other man's stock while in his charge. Normally, a man only used female animals in the first instance, but naturally they produced some male offspring, and if the man in whose charge they had been placed chose to turn them into stall-fattened animals, then for every two he-goats or every two rams he fattened, he was entitled to demand and receive one ewe or she-goat from the owner. When any animals that were *hithio* gave birth to lambs or kids, these had to have their ears marked by cutting (*gĩrima*) in the same way as the parents, that is with the mark of their owner, and not with that of their temporary guardian.

When ewes or she-goats were being taken to be *hithio* with another man, no present accompanied them, but from time to time after that their owner would brew beer and take it to the other man's house, and at the same time make enquiries about his animals.

In addition to these animals to be herded with the ordinary flocks which went out to graze, a man would sometimes take a thin and weak ewe or she-goat to a friend and ask him to stall-feed it. This animal was not stall-fed for slaughter, but for the sake of making it strong and able to bear healthy progeny. A man who undertook this task for someone else was entitled to the third lamb or kid it produced while in his care.

This custom of *kũhithia* (literally, to cause to be hidden) served a number of useful purposes. For instance, if a flock was attacked by disease and every animal died, or if Maasai raided a homestead and carried off all the stock, the man still had property in various other flocks scattered over the country, and the same was true of every man who owned some of the animals in the flock so affected. Also, the practice of boarding them out in this way, since it was mainly applied to female animals, prevented too much inbreeding, for female animals were constantly being moved from one flock to another and so mixing with fresh blood.

When a man went to fetch animals (plus their offspring) that he had "hidden", he had to brew beer to take with him, and usually he would (p.212) not take away all his animals, but leave one or two for his friend to go on looking after.

A man who was in charge of another man's goats and sheep had the full right, if he so wished, to slaughter one or more of them for essential sacrifices but he had subsequently to replace any so sacrificed by others from his own flock, and he had also to report what he had done to the owner.

If an animal held for someone else sickened, it was customary to send a message to the owner to come over and examine it, so that he could take it away if he thought it best to do so, or at any rate, be consulted as to how the sick animal should be treated. If an animal so held died, and its death was due to a disease that did not make the meat unsafe, the guardian of the animal had to skin and divide up the meat, keeping the skin for his wife, and a *guoko* (front leg) and an *ikengeto* (half saddle joint) for himself, but he sent the other meat to the owner in a string bag.

The arrangement already mentioned whereby several flocks were sent out to graze together was a utilitarian one, and was always made between friends. By this arrangement, the boys and warriors of one homestead took charge of several flocks for a period of about six days, and then they handed over the charge of the flocks to the men and boys of one of the other homesteads who were party to the agreement, and so on. Thus the members of each homestead had a fairly long period of freedom to do other essential work, such as cultivation and bush clearing, before they again had to go out with the joint flocks.

It was considered unlucky to herd flocks for more than six days consecutively, for the number seven was an unlucky number. Among most clans and sub-clans, if a man or boy miscounted and herded on a seventh day, the flocks had to be ceremonially purified (see Chapter 28).

Normally, a big joint flock of some 200 or more animals was looked after by two or three warriors and several boys, all armed with spears and swords, because there was always a risk of attack from leopards that lurked in the uncleared areas of land; moreover, there was the possibility of a raid either by some Maasai warriors, or by Kikuyu sheep thieves (*njangiri*). Such sheep thieves were, however, very rare before the great famine of 1898-1899, when their numbers increased greatly.

When men and boys went out to herd flocks it was customary for them to take cold food to eat in the middle of the day, but sometimes if they were going to take the flocks into the vicinity of fields belonging to their parents they would dig up sweet potatoes there and roast them, or get themselves some sugar-cane to eat instead.

Sheep and goats usually fed until about midday, when they were (p.213) taken to an open glade where there were shady trees and they could lie and sleep. While they did so the herdsmen could sit down and rest, but while the flocks were feeding the herdsmen had to keep on the alert all the time to prevent the animals from straying or going into the cultivated areas. It was not common to allow goats and sheep to go to the river in the middle of the day to drink (this is a recent innovation). Instead, the animals were given water to drink in a trough (*mũharatĩ*) in the homestead. This water was always mixed with saline earth.

From time to time the flocks were all driven to the major salt licks, which were fairly scattered. This meant that the flocks more distant from the licks might have to travel six or seven miles. Owing to the distance, they were taken only about once every four or five weeks.

The members of one village usually agreed to take their flocks to salt licks on the same day, so as to have greater numbers of herdsmen looking after the animals. If the Kikuyu spies who were always out watching the Maasai borders knew that the Maasai were on the plains round about where Nairobi is today (about seven miles from the salt lick called Thathini, near where the Kiambu boma is now), then it was arranged that a big band of warriors should go to the salt lick overnight to be on guard in case the Maasai tried to raid the concentrated group of animals. The Maasai also had a spy system and they always knew when big flocks were going to be taken to the lick.

There were a certain number of taboos concerning what a herdsman could or could not do while in charge of the flocks. The most important prohibition was against the killing of any wild animals other than beasts of prey such as lion, leopard, cheetah, and hyena. It was not taboo to kill bushbuck or forest duiker, but ordinary duiker, hares, rats, mice, lizards, and all kinds of birds, including doves and pigeons, could not on any account be killed by herdsmen. If a boy or man in charge of the herds did kill any prohibited animal, he was expected to confess it at once so that the flocks could be purified by the ceremony of *gũthiũrũra mbũri* (to encircle the flock). If this was not done it was believed that the flocks would get contagious abortion (*kĩhuna*). In fact so strong was this belief that if the disease appeared in a flock, all the people who had recently tended that flock were summoned and told that whoever had killed an animal without confessing it had better own up at once. If no one owned up, the ceremony of purification was carried out just the same.

To perform the ceremony, the affected flock was brought to the vicinity of a *mũthakwa*, *mũkenia*, or *mũkeũ* bush, and herded together while a young boy (*kahĩĩ*) led either a young ram or a virgin

ewe round flock counter-clockwise. The ram or ewe having been (p.214) brought to its starting point, some elders slaughtered the animal, and took out the stomach, intact, with the contents inside it. The same boy then went round the flock in a clockwise direction carrying this stomach. This was *gũthiũrũra mbũri*. Then the stomach was cut open and all the contents scattered over the animals save a little that was rubbed upon sticks cut from the *mũthakwa*, *mũkenia*, or *mũkeũ* bush. These sticks were given to the herdsmen and herd boys, who used them to shepherd the flock symbolically, striking the animals lightly with the sticks as if they were driving them out of the grazing grounds. The meat was roasted on the spot and eaten by the herdsmen and herdboys, and by the elders who owned the affected flock.

In cold, misty weather, herders used to carry fire about with them in a brazier improvised from a broken earthenware cooking pot, and fed with little dry sticks of charcoal. They were not supposed to light fire on the ground, as they would then be tempted to sit down round it and not watch the flocks properly.

Another taboo was against any shepherd (apart from very little boys) striking each other and drawing blood. This was a great uncleanness and could be removed only by the immediate slaughter of a ram or ewe, and the performance of the ceremony of *gũthiũrũra* described above. Each of the combatants in this case had a strip of raw-hide (*rũkwaro*) put on his right middle finger.

When a number of different flocks had been tended together as one flock (*rũũru*) during the day, the boys and young men of the various homesteads to which the animals belonged went out to meet the homecoming animals at night so as to take them to their respective homes. Every herdsman and boy knew every one of his own animals by sight and often by name, and he could easily tell if one or more were missing without actually having to count them; it was, in fact, strictly taboo to count the animals in a flock.

If it was found that one or more were missing, the herdsmen would go at once to all the homesteads of the other people whose animals had been herded in the one big flock, and ask if the missing animals were there. If they found them, well and good; if not, they would go back to their own homesteads and perform the ceremony of *kuoha* (to tie up), so as to protect the missing animals during the night.

This magical ceremony was performed as follows. The herdsman who usually looked after the missing animals brought his herding stick, and a piece of it was cut off from one end. Then the woman in whose hut the missing animal usually slept was asked for her firewood carrying strap (*mũkwa wa ngũ*) and her stool. The owner (or guardian) of the animal went into her hut and told the herdsman to tie a knot (p.215) in one end of the strap. This knot was laid on the stool with the bit of the stick, and the herdsman and the owner said, "*Nĩndoha mbũri ndĩkaĩ kũrĩĩka*", or some other such phrase. (There was no fixed phrase, but it was always in the same sense, 'I have tied up the animal so that it may not be eaten'). Then the stool was turned over with its legs in the air, and with the knot of the strap and the bit of stick underneath the seat. This done, the rest of the strap was wound round and round the legs of the stool and left until next morning. Then, before they went to look for the missing animal, the strap was unwound from the stool and the knot undone, so that the animal might be easily found. If they forgot to do this before going in search, they would not find the animal, as it would be invisible to them and to everyone else.

If the search for a missing animal was fruitless, the owner uttered a curse to the effect that, "If anyone has stolen the animal wilfully may he die, and if any wild animal has eaten it may it also die".

It sometimes happened that when a shepherd inspected his flock in the evening he found that someone else's animal had come in with his own. In such a case, he would do nothing that night, as he knew that if this stray beast belonged to any of the people whose flocks regularly went out to graze with his, they would presently come in search of it. If no one did so, he knew that it must belong to some more distant flock, and had become mixed up with his flock either at a salt lick or in the bush while being pastured. In such a case, he would proceed to announce the fact at every big meeting of elders and every beer drink in the neighbourhood, and in time the owner would hear of it. If even this failed to result in the rightful owner coming forward, he would wait until the next big *kĩbaata* dance and assembly was held, and there he would stand up and say, "I have a sheep (or a goat) in my flock that does not belong to me". Other men in the same position would do so too, for it was a recognised thing to do at such assemblies. The people who had lost animals in the interval since the last *kĩbaata* assembly went to the villages of the men who had made the announcements to see if they could pick out their animal, and if they did so, and could prove their ownership, they took the animal away, rewarding the man who had kept it safely for them with beer.

If a man who had found someone else's animal could not find the owner, he went on letting the animal be herded with his own until such time as it died, when he had to hang its carcass up intact in a tree by one of the main pathways through the country. This was to enable all passers-by to see it, so that no one might ever later accuse him of having stolen the animal for his own profit. If the animal had given birth to offspring, however, such offspring became the finder's (p.216) property once the parent animal had died, provided that he had made every effort to find the rightful owner.

It was a punishable offence for anyone, in any circumstances, to kill and eat any animal that had strayed, and that he had taken care of. What is more, to do so would be to take a great risk, for the owner of this animal would in all probability have uttered a curse when he lost it (as mentioned above), and, if so, the person who ate it would assuredly die as a result of that curse.

After every *kĩbaata* ceremony when people had stood up publicly and announced that they had stray animals in their keeping, the council elders followed this up by calling on all the assembly to utter a joint curse on anyone who wilfully and deliberately kept other people's animals without giving notice that he had found them, and the fear of this curse was enough to prevent people from trying to keep animals not lawfully theirs.

Castration of Goats

He-goats were commonly castrated, though rams were not—if rams were to be fattened they were merely segregated from the ewes. The method of castrating he-goats depended upon whether the animal was young or was an adult and had been at stud for some time. In the case of young male goats castrated as kids, the owner took the whole scrotum into his mouth, so as to get his teeth over the junction of the scrotum with the body of the animal, and with his teeth he crushed the tubes (*mĩkiha*) leading to the testes, thus completing the castration.

In the case of an adult animal, castration was performed in one of two different ways. Some people used a small iron awl (*mũkuha*). This was heated in the fire, and with the hot iron the two tubes leading from the testes to the penis were pierced and cauterised. This done, the tips of the two testes were crushed between the teeth of the operator without breaking the skin of the scrotum. This completed the castration.

The alternative method was rather more complicated. The animal was thrown to the ground and held down firmly. A bow was brought, the bow string put against the scrotum, and then wound once round it, so that the bow string constricted the tubes of the testes. Then a small stool was brought, and so placed that the testes lay on it with the tubes resting on its edge. These were then gently but firmly hammered with a small knobkerrie so as to crush them. This done, the animal was released, the crushing of the tube fibres having completed the castration.

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Ownership Markings

Goats and sheep were branded by their owners by cutting the ear or ears in a particular fashion. The main clans each had their own method of thus marking their goats and sheep, and the individual members of each main clan had their own minor variations of that brand. Thus all the *Ambũi* clan cut off a part of the left ear of their kids and lambs, but the various sub-clans did this differently, some cut off only the tip, others cut off half the ear, others two thirds of the ear, and yet others the whole external ear. Or again, in addition to cutting off part of the left ear, some of the sub-clans mutilated the right ear in one way or another.

In spite of this, it was not always possible to tell a man's clan by the way he cut the ears of his sheep and goats, because a man had the right to use the ownership marks of his mother's brother's clan (a relic of the days of matrilineal marriage) and often his descendants followed the same style when marking their animals.

Once an animal had been marked, it never had new marks made on being transferred to another owner either by sale or as a fee or fine, but its offspring, if it was a female animal, would be marked with the mark of the new owner.

In addition to mutilating the ears of the goats and sheep as ownership marks, every Kikuyu cut off ewe lambs' tails (soon after birth) close to the base, while the ram lambs had the lower third of their tails cut off. In the case of the ewe lambs, this was done to facilitate mating, while the cutting off of the lower third of the rams' tails was in order that the fat of the tails might become more concentrated.

If a lamb, either ewe or ram, was born with a twisted tail, that tail was not docked, but as soon as the animal was big enough to leave its mother it was stall-fed (whether ram or ewe), and not allowed to mate at all. When big enough and fat enough it was slaughtered as a sacrifice in the homestead, and was called *mbũri ya ũtonga*, that is, "an animal which brings wealth to the homestead". It was sacrificed to God and the ancestral spirits, and the ceremony was accompanied by the lighting of an *icua*, or ceremonial bonfire (see Chapter 25).

If a kid or a lamb was born with a deformity such as a bent leg or a deformed hoof, it was allowed to live, and carefully tended (even stall-fed), but it could never be sold or parted with, and had to be used for a home sacrifice. It would never be allowed to breed, and was called *kĩgonye* (a crooked or twisted object) or *kaũgũ* (a freak). Sometimes (p.218) lambs were born with short tails, but no special significance was attached to this.

If a lamb with a twisted tail was born to an animal that had been boarded out, it would eventually have to be slaughtered in the homestead in which it was born, and the owner of that homestead gave the owner of the animal another beast in its place. The sacrifice of such animal brought wealth only to the homestead in which it was born, and not to its legal owner.

Abnormal Births

If a she-goat produced twin kids the first time it gave birth, both the mother and the kids were slaughtered, as it was considered unlucky, and the meat could be eaten only by men and women past child-bearing. After a short interval, the whole flock to which the animal had belonged had to be purified by the slaughter of a small ram or a virgin ewe, and by the ceremony of *gũthiũrũra* (encircling) already described. In this instance the ceremony took place in the courtyard, and included a sacrifice involving a ceremonial bonfire, which had to be further purified with honey beer next morning. (see Chapter 28 for details).

If a she-goat that had already borne kids produced twins, this did not matter, but if she produced triplets, then the mother and all three kids were killed, and a purification of the flock had to follow. If a goat produced triplets while out grazing, some shepherds simply did not say anything about it, but suffocated one kid and left the other two, pretending that twins and not triplets had been born. This practice was looked upon with disfavour, as it was liable to bring ill luck to the whole flock.

If a ewe belonging to a member of the Kikuyu initiation guild produced twins at any time, not merely upon its first birth, it was not allowed to live. However, members of the Ũkabi guild did not mind if a ewe had twins after its first birth, so sometimes one of them would give a member of the Kikuyu guild a ram in exchange for such a ewe, instead of having to kill it.

If a goat or ewe died while giving birth to young, its meat was eaten, but only men could eat it. If a goat or a ewe gave birth to a monster (an animal with several heads, or only one eye, or two mouths, etc)., then both the parent and the monster were killed at once. The parent animal could be eaten only by men and by women who were past childbearing, and the monster was cut in half and the halves buried (p.219) in the midden or at the foot of a *mũthakwa* bush. A few days later a young ram or a ewe had to be slaughtered for a purification ceremony (*gũthiũrũra mũciĩ*), as described in Chapter 28.

If a male goat mounted a ewe and tried to serve it, it was prevented from doing so, and if it showed a tendency to go on doing this, it was castrated. On the other hand, if a ram tried to mount and serve a she-goat, both animals had to be killed immediately, but no purification was necessary.

Stall-feeding

As we have seen, rams were never castrated, but were stall-fed in a special stall (*gĩcegũ*) inside a hut if they were to be fattened for slaughter, and not used as stud animals. Similarly, he-goats, barren ewes, and barren she-goats were often put there for fattening. Animals kept in for fattening were allowed out into the courtyard only for a short time each day to drink water and saline earth from the trough. While they were out, their stalls were cleaned. Apart from this they were kept all the time cooped up in the stalls, being fed constantly with sweet potato vine. In addition to sweet potato vine, their stall was often filled with *mũthũnga* leaves and two species of *ihũrũra* vines: *ihũrũra rĩa nyakĩnyoro* and *ihũrũra rĩa nyakĩgĩithio*. They were also given *mũkengeria* stalks to eat.

Milking

She-goats were regularly milked, both morning and evening when the kids were young, but only in the evening, once the kids had grown a little bigger and needed more of the mother's milk themselves. Goats' milk was the special perquisite of the young boys and men who herded the animals, but it could be drunk by others. It was seldom drunk fresh, but was put into a long, narrow gourd (*gĩtete*) that had been smoked (*teera*) with wild olive wood to make the milk go sour, and consumed curdled. It was also sometimes mixed with goats' blood.

The only time a ewe was milked was to provide milk for medicinal or ceremonial purposes. Ewe's milk, for example, was commonly put into a person's eye to soothe the irritation if he had got a little bit of fluff or grass seed in it.

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Bleeding

Goats and sheep were bled from time to time by means of a special bleeding arrow (*ndĩa*). The *ndĩa* for bleeding sheep was different from that used for bleeding goats, while that used for cattle was of yet another type. In bleeding an animal, a leather strip was tied tightly round its neck until the jugular vein swelled up under the pressure of the blood, Then the bleeding arrow was shot from a special bow into this swollen vein and the blood caught in a half-gourd as it spurted out. The blood was consumed in a variety of ways: mixed with fat, mixed with milk, boiled up in water, mixed with honey, etc. but this will be described further in Chapter 8.

The bow used was made of *mũkarakinga* wood, and was only about 18in. long. If possible, it was strung with a strong string made from the sinews of a he-goat. The special bleeding arrows were always kept in a length of hollow bamboo (*kĩrangi*). Male goats and rams were never bled for the sake of their blood, but only as a treatment for illness.

The Slaughter of Goats and Sheep

The number of occasions when the slaughter of a goat or sheep was required in connection with purification, ritual, and religion was so great that the Kikuyu seldom went long without meat. Thus, the killing of goats and sheep simply for the sake of their meat was a rare occurrence.

In fact, apart from rites and ceremonies, goat and sheep meat was eaten only in connection with a meat feast, when an animal died a natural or accidental death, or when an animal was killed by a wild animal. Meat feasts and all the customs connected with them are described in Chapter 8.

A goat or a sheep that had been selected for slaughter in connection with almost any ritual performance, such as when an animal was given to the elders either as a fine or as a fee, was always slaughtered, skinned, and cut up in accordance with a special ritual and custom which was practically never altered. This special ritual and custom will be described here. In all other chapters where the slaughter and cutting up of an animal is mentioned no detailed description will be given unless there is some divergence from the normal circumstances.

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An animal, having been selected for slaughter, was brought to the appropriate spot (which depended upon the circumstances), and laid on its back with its horns (if it had any) stuck into the ground. One man held its front legs and its head, while another gripped the hind legs and at the same time knelt upon the animal's chest. A third man clapped his right hand over the animal's muzzle, closing the nostrils with his fingers and holding the lips tightly shut with the palm of his hand. With his left hand he pressed upon the thorax. Throttled in this way, the animal died of suffocation in about one minute. The man who was kneeling on the animal's chest could feel its heart, and as soon as the heart stopped beating they all released their grip, being careful that, as the animal rolled over onto its side, its legs pointed *rũgũrũ* (upstream, or upcountry).

The animal was next held in such a way that it was lying on its back with all four legs in the air, and the chief skinner made a small transverse slit across the throat slightly behind the angle of the mandible. At the centre of this slit he inserted the point of his knife, and with a sharp movement ran a slit down the centre of the skin of the neck until he reached the beginning of the breast. Here

he paused, and holding the knife point downwards at the place where he had stopped slitting the skin, he made a cut about two inches long to one side of the middle line, and diverging from it by about ¼in. Then he again brought the knife to the point where he had stopped slitting the skin, and made another similar cut on the other side, again diverging from the middle line by about ¼in. Then these two cuts were turned inwards so as to meet again on the middle line, leaving a little "island" of skin attached to the breast of the animal. This little bit of skin was called *kaguoya ga gĩthũri*, and it was sometimes left on the meat when it was roasted.

The skinner now continued to slit the skin down the middle line from the point where the two diverging cuts met again until he reached the penis. Here again he paused, and cut two divergent slits on either side of the foreskin of the penis, leaving it as another small round "island" of skin on the flesh. When the scrotum (*heke*) was reached, its skin was cut round horizontally at almost the halfway line, the "bag" being left on the testicles. Having cut round the scrotum skin, the slit was not carried any further towards the anus, but instead the skinner took each of the four legs in turn and cut a small transverse slit on the inner side of the leg just about at the level of the metacarpals and metatarsals.

From these transverse slits, he now slit down the length of each leg. In the case of the back legs, these slits came down to the scrotum, while (p.222) in the forelegs, the slits came down to points on either side of the "island of the skin" that had been left on the breast.

All the main cuts in the skin having been made by a single skinner, others now helped him to separate the skin from the flesh, but the skin was not at this stage severed from the neck, the anus, or the leg. In fact, the skinning at this stage consisted simply of loosening the skin, and care was taken when skinning down by the ribs on either side to leave the *ngaĩ*, that is, *subcutaneous fascia*, or the tough meaty tissue covering the animal just below the ribs, attached to the skin. This *ngaĩ* was not removed until the skin was pegged out on the following day.

When the skin had been loosened, the animal was ready for the ceremony of *kũratha* (the drawing of blood by piercing the heart). One man stood up with his legs apart, and the carcass was raised from the ground and its loose skin wrapped round it. It was then put into a standing position and thrust between the man's legs so that he gripped it with his knees and held its chest with his arms. A second man went behind and held up the back legs so as to tilt the body forward, the front legs being left dangling to the ground. A third man (the chief skinner) now took his knife in his right hand, and with his left hand holding the animal's head well up, plunged the knife into the centre of the animal's breast in such a way as to reach the heart. If no blood spurted out when he withdrew his knife he was laughed at and someone else took his place and repeated the process. If the thrust was successful, blood spurted out and was caught in a half-gourd (*kiuga*) that had been kept ready for this purpose. When enough blood had been caught in the half-gourd, it was handed to one man whose task was to stir it gently to keep it from curdling and setting before it was wanted. The animal was not allowed to bleed completely, and when the *kiuga* was half full, the head of the dead animal was tilted upwards and the back legs released so that the blood ceased to flow.

The man who pierced the animal then took a little wooden skewer made of such wood as *mũcatha* or *muondwe***,** and inserted it into the flesh on one side of the wound where he had stabbed the animal, and through to the flesh on the other side of the wound. He then gave the skewer one full twist clockwise and inserted the sharp end into the adjoining flesh. In this way the hole was secured so that no more blood could flow out of it; it had been closed (*tuma*).

Next the skin was severed at the four points where the transverse leg slits had been made, and the animal was put down on to leaves that had been spread upon the ground in readiness. These leaves were *mũthakwa, mũkeũ, mũrembu, mũrĩrĩcwa,* or *mũthigiũ*.

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In the case of a really fat animal, it was first laid on its back, and the top layer of fat and connective tissue that overlay the chest and sternum (*gĩthũri kĩerũ*) was cut off. It was then put down on its chest and stomach, with its four legs splayed out, and the next thing was for the skin to be severed at the back of the neck. The skin was gripped firmly and pulled backwards over the animal towards the tail, but was not severed at the tail and anus region just yet.

When the skin had been peeled off the back and left attached at the tail, the next thing to do was to remove the layer of fat and connective tissue that lay over the ribs and back of the animal (the *rĩũa*). This was carefully loosened and turned back, but it was not yet cut off. Next the sinews or tendons of the *longissimus dorsi* muscles (*nga*) had to be removed in the following way. The point of the knife was inserted under the right-hand tendon just by the sacrum. This tendon having been raised, a piece of string was passed under it, knotted, and drawn gently forward towards the shoulders until the tendon came away completely at the top end. It was then turned back over the tail but not yet severed. The left-hand tendon was similarly treated. As an alternative method, a little piece of wood was slipped under the tendons when they had been raised with the knife point, and this bit of wood was then drawn forward, serving the same purpose as the string. When the tendons had been thus treated, any bits of meat on them were removed with the nails of the thumb and forefinger, but they were still not severed at the base near the sacrum. This careful and ceremonial removal of sinews was due to their importance for use as bow strings, for sewing leather garments, and for stringing necklaces.

In the case of an ordinary sheep or goat, after the preliminary skinning, the process continued with the removal of the breast and lungs in the following curious way. With a sharp knife the first four ribs on either side of the vertebral column were cut through about 1in. from their articulation with the vertebrae. Then the point of the knife was inserted between the last cervical vertebra and the last but one, and the spinal cord was severed. This done, the vertebral column was bent backwards to the base of the fourth thoracic vertebra as though it was a kind of box lid hinged at the back, leaving a gaping hole between the points where the four ribs were cut on either side. Through this hole the lungs and heart were visible. The knife was inserted and the trachea or windpipe was severed well forward, and pulled out with the lungs and heart attached. These were then laid aside on leaves, after the heart had been carefully exposed by removing its covering of fat.

The lungs and heart having been removed, the chief skinner scooped (p.224) out the large amount of clotted blood that has accumulated in the cavity, and this was put into the half-gourd containing the other blood, which the man, whose charge it was, continued to stir. The "box lid" (*mũkua-tũhũ*) consisting of five vertebrae, was now severed behind the fourth thoracic vertebra and put on the leaves with the lungs and heart after little bits of the meat attached to it had been cut off and thrown into the half-gourd of blood.

The next thing to be done was to cut off the right forefoot and left hind foot, in that order, at the base of the ulna and tibia respectively These feet had their skin intact and were cooked later with the skin still on, though the hair had been singed off.

Next, the two tendons were severed at the sacrum and handed to one of the elders, who had to remove the meat attached to the base of each by pulling it off with his teeth and eating it. It was taboo to do this with a knife.

Now the layer of fat and connective tissue over the ribs and the back of the animal (the *rĩũa*) was cut off (that is, if the animal was fat enough to have it), and the skin too was carefully cut off, with the tail still attached to it. Once the skin had been detached, the tail was either cut off it straight away, or left on the skin until next morning, depending upon whether the skin was going to remain in that homestead or had been allotted (*ringa*) to someone living elsewhere.

The carcass of the animal was now held up by its hind legs, and the chief skinner cut off the whole hind portion of the animal by severing the vertebral column between the last dorsal and first sacral vertebrae. The scrotum was left attached to the fore part by the abdominal skin, but the rectum or lower end of the gut and the urinary bladder were left attached to the pelvic girdle and sacrum. The hind quarters were laid on one side, and the forequarters laid on the leaves back downwards, so that the intestines, stomach, liver, etc. could be taken out. In removing the stomach, the diaphragm was cut away so that it came out with the liver.

The whole of these internal organs were now handed over to one or two of the men assisting in the work, and they proceeded to deal with them in a way to be described presently.

For the moment, however, we must see how the cutting up of the animal proceeded. One man held up the fore part of the carcass by the head. The flesh that was over the sternum was peeled down from the backbone, and the point of the knife inserted behind the third rib first on one side and then on the other. These six ribs (three on each side), together with part of the sternum, were separated from the rest of the ribs, and left attached to the head and neck, and this part of the (p.225) carcass was put temporarily on one side. Each foreleg (*guoko*) was now removed carefully, the cartilage of the shoulder blade, or *scapula*, with its meat, being left on the remaining ribs, but the main part being left attached to the humerus. The foot still attached to the left foreleg was the cut off, and the ribs were cut on either side of the breast and the breast removed. (This was called *gĩthũri kĩirũ* to distinguish it from gĩthũri *kĩeru*, or the layer of fat over the breast that had been removed before the lungs were exposed). The upper part of the remaining ribs on either side, with the cartilage of the *scapula* attached, were severed from each other by cutting down the middle of the remaining thoracic vertebrae, making two joints, each of which was known as *ikengeto*, roughly a half-saddle joint.

Next the head and neck, with the six ribs (three on each side) and part of the sternum still attached, was dealt with. The latter joint (called *kĩĩga*) was cut off from the neck. Then the oesophagus was pulled back towards the head, and the neck severed behind the axis. This joint was called *ngingo* (neck). The atlas with the throat meat attached to it was then severed from the head, this joint being called *ngata*. When this had been done, the skinner turned his attention to the hind quarters. First of all the skin that was left on the scrotum was pulled off and the testes were cut off and laid on the leaves with the other joints, for these were to be eaten. Then each back leg (*kũgũrũ*) was removed in turn in the following way. The point of the knife was inserted into the acetabulum (the socket on the hipbone into which the thigh bone fits), and the ligament joining the head of the femur to the *ilium* was severed. Then the knife was brought forward in such a way as to leave part of the meat of the leg attached to the pelvis, the rest coming away with the leg. The pelvis was cut open at the *pubic suture* (the *symphysis*), and the urinary bladder (*thũngĩ*) was removed, as was the *gĩtungati* (the rectum or end piece of the gut that had been left with the pelvis). Each half of the

pelvic girdle (*rũhonge*) was now separated from the sacrum, and each had part of the flesh of the leg attached to it as described above. The sacrum was left attached to the lumbar and caudal vertebrae; this joint was called *rũcuthĩ*.

The whole carcass had now been divided into the recognised joints which are listed as follows:

The carcass

Mũkua-tũhũ	The last cervical and first four thoracic vertebrae
Ikengeto	Two joints, each consisting of the upper part of the ten lower ribs on the left and right side, with half the relevant vertebrae and the cartilage of the *scapula* attached (roughly, a half-saddle of mutton) p.226
Guoko	The left and right forelegs, with the *scapula* attached
Kũgũrũ	The left and right back legs, but not the pelvis
Rũhonge	The left and the right pelvic bones, that is, the two halves of the pelvic girdle, each with part of the meat of its respective leg attached
Rũcuthĩ	The sacrum with the lumbar and caudal vertebrae attached
Kĩĩga	The first three ribs of the right and left side respectively, with part of the sternum attached
Ngata	The atlas with the meat of the throat attached
Ngingo	The neck
Mũtwe	The head
Ithagiro	Each of the four feet, up to and including the metatarsals and metacarpals
Gĩthũri kĩerũ	The fat and connective tissue covering the sternum (literally, the white breast)
Gĩthũri kĩirũ	The breast (literally, the black breast, as opposed to the *gĩthũri kĩerũ*)
Rĩũa	The layer of fat and connective tissue off the back of the sacrum and pelvis
Ngaĩ	The tough meaty tissue covering an animal just below the ribs, that is, the *subcutaneous fascia*

While all these joints were being divided up strictly in accordance with age-long custom, other men had been busy dealing with the stomach and intestines, which were also divided meticulously in accordance with definite rules.

First of all, the two kidneys (*higo*) were removed from their surrounding fat, and a small slit was made in the "skin" of each so that this could be peeled off and turned back, but it was not cut off just yet. Then the *rũambũ* (the omentum, or fatty, net-like membrane lining the abdominal cavity), was carefully cut away and put apart from the joints (but not thrown away). The liver was laid on the leaves, and the spleen (*rwariũngũ*) and diaphragm (*habaya*) followed.

This done, the intestines were pulled out straight so that they could be divided into the recognised portions. First, the points of entrance and exit to the stomach were tied, and the intestines cut off below the point of exit. Portions of the intestines were called by different names according to the part referred to. There was the *wei* (the spiral, anterior portion of the colon), and the *mũgathĩ* and *mara*. The word *mara* is often used as a general term for intestines, and *mũgathĩ* means, literally, a necklace. The portions of the sheep referred to here as *mũgathĩ* and *mara* contain parts of both the larger and smaller intestines, combined with their supporting membranes, and look rather like

a beaded collar. It was divided into three parts: *ruoya*, *gĩtũngo*, and *tama*. The *tama* was also sometimes called *gĩtũngũrũ*. The *ruoya* consisted of the *tejunum* with a piece of the posterior colon and supporting membranes, (p.227) the *gĩtũngo*, a piece of the small intestine with a piece of the posterior colon and supporting membranes, and the *tama* the *ileum* with a piece of the posterior colon and the pancreas and duodenum with supporting membranes. When these had been dealt with, the *ceacum* (*mũtura wa kĩboroboro*) was cut off, and then the *ngerima*, which is the *abomasums*, or fourth chamber of the stomach. When this last was cut off, it had to be turned inside out, and if the man who undertook to do this failed in his first attempt, he was laughed at and told: "*Ũrĩ ũiru*" ('You are jealous!').

Attached to the *abomasum* is the *omasum*, or third chamber of the stomach, called *gakuo kaingĩ* or *karaguma*, and this was now cut off, after which the *mũgorogoru*, or lower part of the oesophagus was cut off, and then the *mũromo wa ihu*, the ventral sac of the rumen, or part of the first chamber of the stomach (literally, the entrance to the stomach) was separated from the dorsal sac of the rumen, leaving the dorsal sac (the *ihu rĩa maĩ*) to be dealt with last. From this the reticulum (*kahu kanini*), or second chamber of the stomach was removed and cleaned, and the rumen was turned inside out and its contents (*taatha*) put in a pile on the ground.

While the *wei* and the various other parts of the gut were having their contents squeezed out, some people went off to collect fuel and wood to make the roasting platform and the roasting skewers, and another man was set to work to remove the eyes from the head. This had to be done in such a way that they came out intact. Should either burst in the process, the culprit had to supply another animal for slaughter at once.

The work of preparing the intestines meanwhile continued. The part of the gut that .had been cut off with the hind quarters, the rectum (*gĩtungati*), was now turned inside out, as was the *ceacum* (*kiboroboro*), but the other intestines were merely squeezed. (This was called *kũmiria mara*). The bits of liver and lung were pushed through them with a stick so as to clean out the interior. While this was going on, one man was preparing some small skewers (*njobe*) to be used in fastening up the ends of those portions of the carcass that were to be made into "black puddling" sausages.

A number of little bits of meat were put into the half-gourd and mixed with the blood ready to fill up the sausages. These scraps of meat were taken from the *mũkua-tũhũ* joint (the last cervical and first four thoracic vertebrae), the omentum (*rũambũ*), and the fat and connective tissue covering the sternum (*gĩthũri kĩerũ*), and from any other joints that were ragged, except the *makengeto*, or half-saddle joints. Only small odd scraps were used, and they were well mixed with the (p.228) blood, and to this was added some salt made by burning papyrus. The first sausage to be filled was always the *abomasum*, then the ventral sac of the rumen, next the dorsal sac of the rumen, and lastly the *ceacum*. This last was not skewered, but fastened with little bits of bark string at each end. There was always some blood left over, and this was put into the rectum without any little bits of meat, except the skins of the kidneys. The *wei* and the three sections of the *mara* were not filled with blood or sausage meat, but were cooked as they were.

The full list of pieces into which the viscera were divided is follows:

The viscera in pieces	
Higo	Kidneys
Heke (also called *nyee*)	Testes

Ini	Liver
Mahũri	Lungs
Ngoro	Heart
Gĩtungati	Rectum or anal end of the gut
Ruoya	*Jejunum* with a piece of the posterior colon and supporting membranes
Gĩtũngo	A piece of the small intestine with a piece of the posterior colon and supporting membranes
Tama (also called *gĩtũngũrũ*)	*Ileum* with a piece of the posterior colon and the pancreas and duodenum with supporting membranes
Wei	Spiral, anterior portion of the colon
Kĩboroboro	*Ceacum*
Mũromo wa ihu	Ventral sac of the rumen (part of the first chamber of the stomach)
Ihu rĩa maĩ (also called *Kahu ka ihĩĩ* or *Kahu ka mwĩgunyĩ*)	Dorsal sac of the rumen (part of the first chamber of the stomach)
Kahu kanini	Reticulum (the second chamber of the stomach)
Gakuo kaingĩ (also called *karaguma*)	*Omasum* (the third chamber of the stomach)
Ngerima	*Abomasum* (the fourth chamber of the stomach)
Mũgorogoru	Lower end of the oesophagus
Habaya	Diaphragm
Rwariũngũ	Spleen

In addition to these we may mention the gall bladder (*nyongo*), urinary bladder (*thũngĩ*), penis (*mũthĩgi*), and the eyes (*maitho*), which were the only parts of the animal that were not eaten. They were thrown with the stomach contents (*taatha*). If the "island" of skin (p.229) left on the breast was cut off before the meat was roasted it too was thrown away with these. It had lost any religious significance that it may once have had in the past.

The head and feet of the animal had the skin left on, as we have already noted. The head was placed on a log of wood and was well beaten with a club or an axe handle so as to break the skull bones, or at least crack them, and at the same time break off the horn cores and horns. When the head had been treated thus, it was held over a flame to singe off all the hair, and the feet were similarly treated. After this singeing (*kũriga*), the hair was scraped off with a knife and these five joints were washed in water to remove the smell of burnt hair. The hooves and pads were removed from each foot by giving them a sharp twist. The head was split along the line of the sagittal suture from the *foramen magnum* (to the tip of the nose), and a cut was made underneath each ear from the *foramen magnum* to the lips, and in this way the head was divided into three parts: a right half of the braincase with one ear, a similar left half, and the lower jaw with the tongue. This completed the dividing up of the animal.

The details of the method of cooking the various joints and of their allotment among different members of the family (in the case of an animal slaughtered at home), or among the elders, etc. (in the case of an animal slaughtered in connection with some special ceremony), will be dealt with

in the chapter on food (Chapter 8), and in the chapters dealing with the various ceremonies concerned.

The skin of a goat or sheep was always kept and pegged out on the day after it was slaughtered, and the pegging out had to be done in accordance with recognised rules. The skin was put down on the ground with the hair downwards, and a series of holes (*maambo*) were cut all round the edge to take the stretching pegs (*nyambo*). If only one man cutting them, he cut the first hole in the middle of the neck and worked round counter-clockwise. When two men worked together, the second started at the tail and also worked counter-clockwise.

The necessary holes having been cut, the skin was laid on the ground, hair still downwards, with the neck end facing the hut of the senior woman of the homestead and the tail end facing the homestead entrance. The first two pegs to be put in were always those on the outer edges of the neck skin, then two pegs on either side of the tail area. After this the hinder side of the skin of the back legs was so pegged that a straight line between the pegs would pass through the tail. The two men worked from the tips of the leg skins up either side of the skin till they reached the neck.

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While the pegging out of the skin was in progress the little bits of meat attached to the skin (*ciambũrĩro*) were cut off and given to the children of the homestead where the skin was being pegged out.

Diseases of Goats and Sheep

Goats and sheep were subject to a variety of diseases which were recognised, named, and treated by the Kikuyu.

Kihuna (*Contagious Abortion*)

This was not regarded as a disease in the strict sense of the word, but as a misfortune due either to accidental or deliberate breaking of taboos by the shepherd, causing the flocks to become impure and so to abort. We have already described the ceremony of *gũthiũrũra mbũri* (to encircle the flock) which was used to get rid of this impurity. Sometimes, however, an animal continued to abort regularly, in which case the owner put a rawhide collar round its neck. This was cut from the skin of a wild pig (*ngũrũe*), or, failing that, of a wart hog (*ngĩrĩ*). Because of this, whenever a wild pig or a wart hog was killed, its skin was divided up, and the pieces given to various elders, who kept them until such time as they and their friends needed a strip of the skin for the purpose just described.

Rũharo (*Diarrhoea*)

Goats and sheep suffered a great deal from this complaint, and the standard remedy was **a** dose made in the following way. Leaves and stems of the plant called *kanyanja* were crushed together with young leaves of *mũthakwa*, and mixed with water. To this was added soot from the roof of the hut (*mũrarĩ*), a little red ochre (*thĩrĩga*), and some ash from a burnt banana leaf of the *mũnjũũ* species of banana**.** The whole concoction was stirred up, strained, and given to the animal to drink. Except in severe cases, this cured the animal of its diarrhoea. Another remedy was to give the sick animal the juice of the plant called *mũhũithia mwerũ*.

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Ngaĩ (*Swollen Glands*)

If an animal developed a swollen gland, the gland was lanced with a bleeding arrow (*ndĩa*). Then a *mũtũrirũ wa mbarĩki* (a piece of castor oil stem, which was hollow and tubular) was cut, and a man took a mouthful of clean water, inserted one end of the tube into the lanced area, and blew water into the swollen gland as an injection. The swollen gland was then massaged and squeezed to extract the pus and water. An animal usually recovered after this treatment.

Rũgurumo (*Foot Rot*)

Sheep in particular, and occasionally goats, were liable to get foot rot during wet weather. If this trouble developed it could be cured easily provided it was not neglected and allowed to get too bad. In treating it the foot was first washed in water mixed with Magadi soda. Then leaves of the *mũhũithia mwerũ* plant were heated, and, when hot, the *juice* was squeezed out liberally over the affected foot. One or two treatments in this way effected a rapid cure. After each application of the juice of these leaves the foot was rubbed over with animal fat.

Kĩoyo (*Growth Between the Hooves*)

Sometimes sheep and goats started to limp as a result of a complaint called *kĩoyo*, a growth between the hooves. It was treated as follows. An awl was stuck into the base of the growth to hold it firmly, and then the skin all round the growth was carefully cut with a sharp knife. This done, the whole growth was pulled out "by the roots". The wound was then washed with hot water blown into it through a castor oil stem. Then animal fat was applied to the wound to keep out dust and dirt. The animal so treated always recovered quickly.

Itumia (*Mouth Disease*)

The disease affected only sheep. It caused the mouth, lips, and tongue to swell up and break into sores. If this disease was not treated in the correct way the animal died, but if treated as follows it invariably recovered in a few days. The leaves of the *mũtongu*—the species that has no thorns on the leaves and whose berries do not go all striped (p.232) when ripening—were dipped into water after being folded to a suitable size. These were rough but harmless. Having been wetted, they were then dipped into powdered Magadi soda, and the whole tongue and inside of the cheeks and lips were rubbed over with the leaves and soda, till the scabs of the sores were removed, and the lips, cheeks and tongue were bleeding slightly. This bleeding was intentional in order that the soda should get into the blood. Then animal fat was heated, and rubbed all over the wounds, after which honey was applied. One such treatment was usually enough to effect a cure in two or three days.

Mũhare (*Mange in Goats*)

The treatment for this was as follows. Leaves of the *mũhoko* plant were collected, or the bark of the *mũthaĩ* tree, and these were crushed and dipped in water so that the water became saturated with the poisonous juice. Then a little buffalo dung was added (if it was obtainable), and a little burnt hair of the red forest duiker (also only if available), and the animal was rubbed thoroughly with this mixture on all parts of its skin affected by the disease. Then castor oil, or else the residual husks of castor oil from which most of the castor oil had been extracted, was applied to the mangy parts. The disease was speedily cured and the hair grew again normally.

Nyongo (*Liver or Gall Bladder Disease*)

This disease affected the gall bladder and liver, and the Kikuyu knew no real cure for it, although some people used to treat *nyongo* in goats and sheep by pounding the leaves of *mũthakwa*, *gaciĩ*

keru, *kanyanja mũiganjo*, and *kagatu* with water, the mixture being given to the sick animals to drink. According to my informants this caused the gall bladder to burst, and the animal recovered.

Mahũri (*Lung Disease*)

This was a fatal disease affecting the lungs of sheep and goats, and often wiping out large flocks completely unless the proper precaution were taken. A few men are said to have known certain plants from which a portion was made to cure animals actually suffering from disease. The only man claiming such knowledge that I have met (p.233) made the portion by boiling *njahĩ* beans for a long time, and giving the water they were boiled in to the sick animal to drink.

On the other hand, it was universally believed that the spread of the disease could be checked by vaccination in the following manner. An animal that was already affected and dying of this disease was slaughtered and its affected lungs cut out. Then every animal in the flock had a cut made on its nose and the skin turned back so as to allow a little bit of the affected lung to be inserted under the skin and into the blood. The wound was swollen next day and the animals were a little off colour. On the third day the wound was opened, the little piece of lung removed, and the wound bathed with hot water and allowed to heal. It was believed that animals treated thus would not get the disease, or, if they did, that it would not be fatal.

Mũkũyũkũyũ (*A Skin Disease in Sheep, resembling Mange*)

The treatment for this was not the same as for *mũhare* in goats, and, in fact, that treatment had no effect on this skin disease of sheep. For its treatment, a *kĩenja* of a banana stem, that is to say, the rotting roots where a banana tree had been cut down, was dug up and heated in a big fire so that the juice in it was very hot. Then this juice, together with wood ash, was rubbed over the affected areas, after which castor oil was applied. This was an effective cure.

Mũũrirũ (*Anthrax*)

This occasionally affected sheep as well as cattle, but never goats. No cure was known.

Since the coming of the white man, various other diseases of goats and sheep have made their appearance in Kikuyu country, but these will not be dealt with here.

Cattle

Although every Kikuyu aspired to have cows and bulls of his own, these animals were not regarded as so important as goats and sheep, since they were not used in connection with all the various sacrifices and ceremonies. In fact, a man started acquiring cattle only after he already possessed a reasonable number of goats and sheep, and cattle (p.234) were definitely regarded as wealth. With minor exceptions, such as the sacrifice to seal a marriage contract (*ya kũgurarĩria ũthoni*), cattle were not used for sacrifices, and they were slaughtered only in connction with meat feasts (*irugũ*).

Terms and Colourings

Cattle as a whole were spoken of in general terms as *ng'ombe*, but more specifically, bulls were called *ndegwa cia njamba*, bullocks *ndegwa*, heifers *mori*, milch cows *ng'ombe cia mũgoma*, and calves *njaũ*.

Like goats and sheep, cattle all had special descriptive names follows:

Cattle	
Cow	*Ox* or *Bull*

Thĩrũ	*Gĩthĩrũ*	Pale red markings at ears and eyes
Guathi	*Kĩguathi*	With a large white patch extending from the belly to the ridge of the back, on one side only
Ngũguarũ or *Nguguarũ*	*Gĩkuguarũ*	With black spots on a dirty white or brown background
Bĩndu	*Kĩbĩndu*	Dirty white to pale brown
Ndiboe	none	Pure white
Mũkiĩ	*Kĩmũkiĩ*	Light-brown
Ngaruthi	*Gĩkaruthi*	Speckled ears
Ngĩi	*Gĩkĩi*	Piebald (black and white)
Barikũi	*Kĩbarikũi*	Cream or very light-brown
Ngunũ	none	The colour of a red forest duiker
Thambu	none	Dark reddish-brown flecked with white
Muunge	*Kĩmuunge*	With light-brown hair hanging down a tail, breast, or belly
Thirua	*Gĩthirua*	The colour of an eland
Buthi or *Mbuthi*	*Kĩbuthi*	Ash grey colour
Ngenye	none	With a white spot on the forehead
Nyange	*Kĩnyange*	White

In addition to these names denoting special colours, animals without tails were called *mũtirũ*, and hornless ones, *mũrĩa*. Further, most animals·in a herd had special names given them by the herdsmen, names which did not denote colour so much as character. Thus one would be called *Karemeri* (the one that had a bad temper), another *Thingu* (the good one), etc. A full list of such names cannot be listed as there were hundreds of them, depending upon individual idiosyncrasies, and they were not recognised throughout Kikuyu country.

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Herding and Grazing

Cattle were always housed at night in the cattle enclosure (*kiugũ*) built behind the men's hut of the homestead, and the young calves were always kept at night in the men's hut, and never put to sleep in the women's huts. This rule was due to the fact that calves were indiscrimate in their tastes, and unlike goats and sheep, were quite likely to lick stools and other furniture, or try to eat the women's leather garments that were hung up at night in the huts. To do any of these things and hence come into contact with menstrual blood, was disastrous**,** and anyone who later ate the meat of such animals or drank their milk or blood would certainly die. Contact between menstrual blood and cattle was utterly taboo, and although, as we shall see, women did some of the milking, they could not do so during their periods. They could, however, go into the enclosures to sweep them out even when in this condition.

For the most part, except in the densely populated areas, cattle were kept in the homestead and grazed in the vicinity, but from time to time, when the warriors who acted as watchers and spies gave information that the Maasai had moved well away from the Kikuyu borders, herds of Kikuyu cattle were taken down to the grasslands that bordered the forest in the lower lying areas. Here special enclosures were built for them, to each of which were attached a few temporary huts of the

gĩthũnũ type for the herdsmen to sleep in. These herdsmen were all drawn from the warrior classes, and were sometimes accompanied by a few of the older uninitiated boys, but never by women. Cattle were usually herded separately from the goats and sheep, except in the case of a man who had only one or two animals, in which case he might send them out with the sheep and keep the calves at home.

Cattle, unlike goats and sheep, were taken every day a little before midday to the nearest river to drink, for cattle needed a lot of water. In hot weather they were given a second drink at about three o'clock in the afternoon. Cattle were taken to the salt licks about every 18 days, that is to say, if they went during X's herding period, then they would not go again until two others had each had them for six days, for, as in the case of goats and sheep, no man herded cattle for more or less than six consecutive days.

Cattle were always taken to the licks at the same time as the goats and sheep, and all the stock of *mwaki* territorial division, containing several villages**,** went together.

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As in the case of sheep and goats, a man did not like to have "all his eggs in one basket", so cattle were also boarded out. However, when a man wanted to board out a cow, he had first of all to brew beer for the man whom he was going to ask to keep it for him. This beer was called *njohi ya kũhithia*.

A man who undertook to look after other people's cows in this way received one ewe for every ten calves born and bred while the stock was in his keeping, but he would not receive one of the calves unless and until he had had 30 calves bred from the stock in his charge. On the other hand, in return for his labours he used the milk and blood of the animals in his charge, which were thus of great benefit to his family, especially to his boys and young men.

If a man castrated two of the bull calves in the stock he was looking after for someone else, and bred them into big bullocks that grew fat, and ready for slaughter, he received a ewe as a fee for this service when he handed the animals to be slaughtered over to the real owner.

When a cow or an ox was lost, there was no special ceremony of *kuoha* (tying up) as in the case of goats and sheep, because this had been done in advance by a medicine-man. It was in fact, a rule that when a man built a cattle enclosure he called in a medicine-man, who made a special charm to prevent the cattle from straying, being attacked by wild beasts, or from being stolen. This charm (*kĩoho*) was made from an old axe handle, into the hollow of which certain magic powders were put. Then this handle, some flies from each animal, and some soil from the ground they had trodden on were put into a string bag, which was bound round with *mũriĩra* creepers. The cattle enclosure with the cattle in it was then encircled (*thiũrũra*) with the charm, accompanied by a calf, and the charm put in the men's hut. If cattle were moved to another enclosure down on the plains at any time, they were accompanied by this charm. (For further details of this magical ceremony see Chapter 26).

As only a small proportion of the Kikuyu owned cattle, the difficulty of finding special herdsmen for the cattle seldom arose, for if a man was wealthy enough to have a big herd of cattle it was also certain that he had a big family of relatives and descendants, and probably a number of hangers-on or serfs (*ndungata*).

All Kikuyu cattle were of the humped variety with horns of only medium length, and they were mostly obtained in the first instance by raiding the Maasai, and after that by their natural increase.

Only occasionally would a man who had sheep and goats exchange them for cows, for the former were really of more use, unless he was very rich.

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Castration of Bulls

The castration of bulls was performed as follows. Whether the animal was quite young or had already been at stud, it was tied up very firmly, all four legs being tied together, and then thrown to the ground and held down by a number of men. A skilled operator performed the castrating operation, in return for which he received a fee of beer. The tip of the skin over the testes was cut off with a sharp knife and the skin pushed back, exposing the two testicles. Each of these in turn were gently pulled and manoeuvred until the tubes linking each with the penis were exposed far back, where they were cut off and then removed. This done, the wound was washed out carefully with clean water two or three times, and then fresh cow dung was applied to the outside of the wound to plaster it over and keep off the flies. Next a little hair was plucked from the region just in front of the testicles, from the stomach, from the neck, and from below the chin of the animal. This hair was put into its mouth "to make it grow fat". The animal was then released. The testicles were put in the owner's hut, where they remained until they rotted away. After the wound had healed the ox was bled once, but this blood was allowed to go to waste on the ground, and not drunk.

Ownership Marks

Cattle were not branded in the way that Maasai cattle were branded, but had the ears notched and cut as in the case of goats and sheep. The only occasion upon which a cow or bull was branded with a hot iron was as treatment for certain diseases. On the other hand, as many Kikuyu cattle were animals raided from the Maasai, it was a common thing to see cattle with extensive brand marks on them from their previous owners.

Cattle Births

If in calving, a cow's labour was prolonged, a specially skilled man was called in to give assistance, and if necessary turn the calf in the womb so that it could be born. Before he did this, he washed his hands, pared (p.238) his nails removed all rings and ornaments from fingers and wrists, and anointed his hands with castor oil; only then did he insert his hands into the vagina. Sometimes a cow's labour was so prolonged that the calf died inside its mother, and yet the mother could not expel it. In this case a specialist was called in to dismember the calf inside womb and draw it forth piecemeal. In return for this work he received a fee of beer. The specialist did not remove the caul and afterbirth, but after the calf had been removed, the cow was given a drink of water in which a little soda and the roots of a castor oil plant had been boiled. This stimulated her enough to expel them herself. If a cow died in labour, it was cut up and eaten, but first the calf was removed from the womb. If it had developed full hair, such an unborn calf could be eaten by the boys; otherwise it was thrown away. Such a cow was not cut up in the ceremonial way to be described presently, but in any convenient manner. This was also true of any ox or cow that died a natural death, as distinct from one deliberately slaughtered.

Milking

Cattle were milked by young warriors, boys, and occasionally women, but no married man was ever allowed to milk cattle. If he did so and then had intercourse with his wife or wives, the calves would all sicken and die. The milk of cows was the special perquisite of the warriors**,** in recognition

of the fact that they protected the cattle from Maasai raiders, and that they were often the means by which extra cattle were obtained for the family through raids on the Maasai. The warriors**,** in fact, were called *ene iria*, owners of the milk, but by custom they always gave a share to the married men, and, if there was enough, to some of the older boys who helped them with the herding. A certain portion of the milk, too, was usually given to the young children and to infants whose mother's milk was insufficient, but this was done only with the consent of the warriors.

Milk was consumed either fresh, when it was called *iria rĩa mwĩtha*, or mixed with clotted blood obtained by bleeding the cattle, this mixture being called (*ngĩbũtũ*). Occasionally milk was mixed with the fresh raw blood, and it was then called *iria rĩrathĩre*, but most commonly, milk was put into a special long, narrow gourd (*gĩtete*) which had been smoked out with wild olive wood smoke. Once put into such a bottle, milk curdled rapidly and acquired a special taste from the olive smoke. It was then called *iria imata*.

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When milking a cow, a young man or a boy squatted on his heels and held the milking gourd (*mbũthũ*) in his left hand, milking only with his right hand. This he did by taking the teat between his thumb and first finger and squeezing slightly, at the same time drawing the thumb and finger down the length of the teat. Women never squatted when milking, but stood by the cow and bent their backs horizontally forward, resting the forehead against the cow's flank. They, too, milked with only one hand, and by the pulling method.

Milk gourds were commonly washed out with cow's urine, and milkers also washed their hands in this urine when a cow urinated, but the urine was not actually mixed with the milk as it was in some tribes.

A cow whose calf had died very young, and which was still being milked was called *kĩbege*. When a calf died thus it was skinned carefully, stuffed with grass, and taken to the mother every time she was milked, for no Kikuyu cow would allow itself to be milked unless either its live calf or the stuffed skin was by its side. No cow was ever milked dry, for the calves had to have their share, and they were always allowed to suck directly from the mother; they were never hand fed.

Bleeding

The bleeding of cattle for raw blood was a recognised practice among the Kikuyu, but cattle were bled only when they were in good condition, especially during the wet weather when there was plenty of pasture. Blood was a luxury for the Kikuyu and not a regular food as it was among the Maasai.

Cows, heifers, and young bullocks were the only animals bled. Bulls and bullocks were never bled except as treatment for sickness. The method of bleeding was as follows. An animal having been selected, a man seized a horn in his right hand and the tongue and the lower jaw in his left. Thus gripped, the animal was in the man's power. Then a second man passed a leather thong round the animal's neck and drew it tight in a slip knot. The loose end was passed under the animal's forelegs and over its back, where it was held tight by another man. The thong drawn tight round the animal's neck caused the jugular vein to swell up, and when it had done so a third man came with a special bow and cattle bleeding arrow (*ndĩa*). The bow and arrow were held in such a way that when the bow was drawn back (p.240) the tip of the arrow was only about 6in. away from the animal. Where the bow string was released it was not completely released as in a shooting, but the arrow was kept in a grip between the thumb and forefinger and allowed to slip forward under the pressure of the

bow string. (It was not shot from a distance of 6ft. as described by Routledge). The arrow, which had never been released from the man's finger and thumb, was withdrawn, and as this was done the blood spurted out and a fourth man quickly held a gourd vessel in such a way as to collect it. When about two to three pints had been drawn off, the thong was released, and the wound plastered over with fresh cow dung "to keep the flies out". The animal was let loose and another seized, and so on, till the warriors had as much blood as they needed for mixing with their fresh milk, or for clotting to make *ngĩbũtũ*. An animal that had been bled was not bled again until a month or two had elapsed**,** except in times of famine, when of course, all stock was bled frequently to provide nourishment for the family.

The Slaughter of Cattle

We have seen that goats and sheep for slaughter had to be killed and cut up in a special way in accordance with ancient custom. The same was true of the killing and cutting up of cattle that were slaughtered in all ordinary circumstances, and the following is a detailed description of that method. Animals that died a natural or violent death (that is, that were not killed intentionally) were not cut up in this ceremonial way, but in any way that was convenient, as though they were wild animals that needed no special ceremonies.

Normally, all cattle, oxen, barren cows, etc. were killed by means of a small knife (*raũ*), which was jabbed into the animal's neck between the atlas and the axis so as to cut the spinal cord. If, however, an ox was used as a sacrifice in the place of a goat, or of two goats, then it had to be slaughtered by suffocation just as a goat would be suffocated. To suffocate an ox, it was bound and thrown to the ground. Then its throat was corked with part of the inner stem of a banana tree (*mũramba*), and its nostrils closed by hand. Unable to breathe properly, it died in about a minute.

The method of slaughtering with the small knife was as follows. The animal to be slaughtered was driven to the spot where it was to be killed and cut up. Its hind legs were tied together and it was forced into a kneeling position on the ground, where it was firmly held by (p.241) two or three men. The others seized its horns and lower up and bent its head well forward so as to stretch the neck a little and make it possible to drive the knife in between the atlas and axis. The slaughterer now placed the tip of his two-edged knife on the skin at the exact point where he judged the gap between the atlas and the axis to be. He then gave the handle of the knife a sharp blow with the palm of his right hand, thus driving the blade right in up to the hilt, and severing the spinal cord. If the slaughterer was unskilled and failed to kill the animal at the first attempt, he was disgraced. If the man was skilled, the animal died instantly, the knife was withdrawn, and the wound stopped up with leaves of *mũkeũ* or *muondwe* so as to stop any bleeding. The leather thongs that had bound the animal were then untied, and the carcass was rolled over on to its right side.

With a sharp knife, a slit was now made in the skin on the right side of the neck about 4in. below, and parallel to, the middle line. The skin of the right breast was separated from the flesh, skinned back about 10in., and allowed to lie on the ground immediately below the animal's head and chest. This done, the ceremony of drawing the animal's blood had to be performed. **A** man thrust a long knife from the right breast upwards and inwards so as to reach the heart. When he withdrew his knife the blood gushed out on to the flap of skin already mentioned. A small boy stood ready with a wisp of *nyeki ya kĩgombe* (Kikuyu grass**),** and he immediately dipped this into the blood and dragged it away**,** leaving a trail of blood on the ground. He then had to rush back, lie on his stomach, and drink some of the warm blood as it gushed out. **As** soon as the boy had done this,

any warriors who were present lay on their stomachs and drank freely of the warm blood. Some of it was also caught in small half-gourds and passed to the older married men to drink.

When the flow of blood lessened, the wound was stopped with *muondwe* or *mũkeũ* leaves, or sometimes *mũthakwa* leaves, and the skinning and cutting up of the carcass proceeded as follows. The slit in the skin that was made on the right side 4in. or so below, and parallel to, the middle line was then continued right down to a point just in front of the scrotum. A similar slit was made on the left side from neck to the scrotum. Then the strip of skin between them was peeled back from the scrotum to the neck, where it was left attached to the head. This 8in. strip of skin was called *mũkore*, and it was always used for making cattle bell collars, thongs for tying sweet potato vine, and other similar purposes.

The carcass was then turned over so that it was lying on its back with all four legs in the air. These were held by four people while the (p.242) chief skinner made a slit in the meat of the breast and turned back the upper layers of meat to the right and to the left so as to expose the lump of fat on the tip of the sternum (*ngaragaro*). A small bit of this was cut off at once and eaten raw by the small boy who had drunk the first blood. Then the warriors who had drunk the blood divided up the rest of the *ngaragaro*, and they also ate it raw. This was an essential ritual and could not be omitted. When it was over the skinning of the animal proceeded, with two or three men working on either, skinning down their respective sides to the back line. They skinned the legs from the fetlocks downwards, leaving the skin of the metacarpals and metatarsals on the bone as in the case of sheep. The feet were called *mathagiro*.

Usually the skinners on one side were quicker than the others, and the animal was turned over to lie on whichever side was first finished, and the skinning of the second side was completed while it lay on its side. The skin of the side it was laid on was stretched out on the ground to protect the meat from dust and dirt. Then the upper layers of the breast meat (*gĩthũri*) that had been turned back to right and left to allow the removal of the *ngaragaro* were cut off, the right breast being put on a bed of leaves on the right side, and the left on a bed of leaves on the left side. All the rest of the joints except those that were not 'paired" would be put on to their respective piles, on the right or left, according to which side they were cut from. The joints of whichever side of the animal was uppermost were cut off in the following strict order, each side being treated in the same way.

First the *mũrote* (the oblique external abdominal muscle) of the side being dealt with was cut off and put on the appropriate pile. Then the front leg was cut off at the upper end of the humerus, so as to leave the *scapula* and the muscles of the *scapula* still in position. The removal of the front leg exposed this *scapula* joint, called *nyakĩrigite* or *gĩciri*, part of which was in the armpit, and it was carefully cut off. Now the *ngĩrĩmia* (the *subcutaneous fascia*, which covered the animal below the ribs) was separated and cut off, followed by the *mũũguũ* (the *semimembranosus* muscle) on the back leg, then by the *mũũthĩ* (the *semitendinosus* muscle), also on the back leg, and the *rũguatani*, the remaining soft meat on the inside of the back leg, with the tibia and foot attached. This done, attention was turned to the *rũga* (the *longissimus dorsi* muscle). It was separated from the ribs at the shoulder end and gradually forced from the bone and turned right back, but it was left attached to the sacrum. The shoulder blade with its meat attached was also turned back to expose the ribs below it. This joint, too, was not removed at this stage, but left attached by muscle at the hump.

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Now with a sword the ribs of the side being dealt with were all cut through about 5in. from the sternum. The one nearest the neck was left attached to the neck, but the next two were separated from that and from the others by passing a knife between the first and second, and the third and fourth ribs. The second and third were called *mbaru cia thakame*, or sometimes *mbaru cia athĩnji*, and were removed by disarticulating them from the vertebrae. Next a knife was passed between the eleventh and twelfth ribs, and the flesh slit right up to the vertebral column, after which the fourth to the eleventh rib inclusive were all removed together. Those were the *mbaru* proper. At the vertebral end they, too, were removed by disarticulating them from the vertebrae. The last two ribs (*ngenethe*) were also removed, and then the animal was ready to be turned over for the other side to be similarly jointed.

The same joints were separated from this other side, leaving, as before, the *rũga* attached to the sacrum. The animal was then turned on to its back, with the femora and breast bone or sternum facing upwards. The next thing was to cut out the joint known as *kabuutu* (the upper part of the sternum), so as to expose the cavity containing the lungs and heart. These (the *mahũri* and *ngoro*) were removed through this opening and a little given to the small boys to go and roast; the rest was put to one side. Then the two joints known as *njũũgũ* (the internal oblique abdominal muscle, where all the abdominal muscles join ventrally) were separated from the lower part of the sternum, turned back, and left attached to the sacrum like the *rũga*. This done, the *rũkiibi* (the *aponeurosis* of all the abdominal muscles) was drawn back and cut off behind the scrotum, so that this was left attached to the *rũkiibi*. (In the case of a barren cow, the udder—*mũkamo*—was removed separately, followed by the *rũkiibi*).

A bed of green banana leaves or of *mũthakwa* leaves had been prepared, and the whole of the stomach and intestines were now pulled out and put on these leaves. One kidney (*higo*), however, was left attached to the vertebral column (*ihĩndĩ*), and the lower part of the gut (*gĩtungati*) was severed and left inside the pelvic cavity for the present. The diaphragm (*rabatĩ*) was taken out with the stomach.

While the stomach and intestines were being divided up by some of the men, the others completed the skinning of the hump (*iguku*) so as to remove it with the cartilage of the two shoulder blades still attachd. This joint was called the *gikombe*.

Now the skin was cut through just behind the skull at the *ikano*, the place where the slaughterer's knife had been driven in between the atlas and the axis, and the neck meat was cut off from the backbone. The head and neck were removed and put on one side. Then (p.244) attention was turned to the pelvic girdle and the femora (thigh bones), all of which were still intact.

Here, the first joint to be removed was that known as the *ndagatang'i*, which lay over the pubic arch and up the inside of the two femora. Having been removed, it was divided into two joints, one for the left side and one for the right. Then followed the *itina rĩa kiugũ* (also called *itina rĩa hingi*), which was also between the legs, but rather further back. The two femora with the thigh meat (*kiero*) attached were removed from the pelvis at the acetabula (hip sockets).

The pubic arch of the pelvic girdle was then cut away with part of the pubic bone at each side, and this was called the *kahĩndĩ ka athĩnji* The removal of this exposed the pelvic cavity, and the two *ilia* (the fattened upper bones of the pelvis forming part of the hip bone) were now bent back from the sacrum and removed. These were called *honge* (literally, branches). This made it possible to remove the anal end of the gut or the rectum (*gĩtungati*), and the urinary bladder (*thũngĩ*). Now the distal end of the sacrum was cut off with the tail and the rest of the vertebral column, including the

sacrum, was removed with the two tendons and meat of the *longissimus dorsi* muscle *nga*), the two internal oblique abdominal muscles (*njũũgũ*), and the one kidney still attached to it. The tail was pulled out of its skin, and it, and the bit of sacrum attached to it, was called the *kahĩndĩ ka arĩithi*. It was always the perquisite of the man who had habitually herded the animal. Then the diaphragm was removed and put with the vertebral column, and next the *ihu rĩa gĩkonyo* or ventral sac of the rumen, corresponding to the *mũromo wa ihu* in a sheep, was cut off and also put with the vertebral column.

The second kidney was for the skinners of the beast. The *gĩtũngo kĩa mara* (a part of the intestines) was also put with the vertebral column, and the *mũtura* (the colon and part of the rectum) was cut up into eight equal parts, and turned inside out to clean out the contents. The *omasum*, or fourth chamber of the stomach (the *ngerima*), was divided into two parts, but the dorsal sac of the rumen, or first chamber of the stomach (the *ihu rĩa maĩ*), and *omasum*, or third chamber of the stomach (*gakuo kaingĩ* or *karaguma*), were each divided into eight parts.

The urinary bladder (*thũngĩ*) was blown up like a toy balloon and then allowed to dry. It was not eaten, but when dry it was rubbed soft and used by warriors as a container for parched corn when they went on a journey or a raid into Maasai country. The four feet, with the skin left on (*mathagiro*) were the perquisite of the owner of the animal. They were separated from the legs after the main jointing was over. This completed the division of the carcass.

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An animal that was killed by suffocation as a substitute for a he-goat for a ceremonial purpose was cut up in exactly the same way.

The carcass had thus been partitioned into the following pieces.

The carcass of a cow in pieces	
Ngaragaro	Lump of fat on the tip of the sternum
Gĩthũri	Upper layers of the breast meat, right and left
Mũrote	Oblique external abdominal muscles
Guoko	Front legs, right and left
Nyakĩrigite (also called *gĩciri*)	Whole *scapula* and attached muscles
Ngĩrimia	*Subcutaneous fascia*, which covered the animal below the ribs
Mũũguũ	*Semimembranosus* muscle, on the back leg
Mũũthĩ	*Semitendinosus* muscle, on the back leg
Rũguuatani	Meat on the inner side of the back leg, right and left
Rũga	The tendons and meat of the *Longissimus dorsi* muscle, the uppercut of a European sirloin
Mbaru cia thakame (also called *mbaru cia athĩnji*	Second and third ribs, right and left
Mbaru (proper)	Fourth to the eleventh rib inclusive, right and left
Ngenethe	Last two ribs, right and left
Kabuutu	Upper part of the sternum
Mahũri	Lungs

Ngoro	Heart
Njũũgũ	Internal oblique abdominal muscle
Rũkiibi	*Aponeurosis* of all the abdominal muscles
Ihĩndĩ	Vertebral column
Ikombe	Hump with the cartilages of the two shoulder blades, cut in halves
Ndagatang'i	Meat over the pubic arch, and up the inside of the two femora, right and left
Itina rĩa kiugũ (also called *itina rĩa hingi*	Meat between the back legs, but farther back than the *ndagatang'i*
Kĩero	Thigh bone and meat, right and left
Kahĩndĩ ka athĩnji	Pubic arch with part of the pubic bone on either side
Rũhonge	*Ilium*, right and left
Kahĩndĩ ka arĩithi	Tail and the bit of sacrum attached to it
Ngingo	Neck with one rib on each side
Mũtwe	Head, split into three sections
Ithagiro	Foot, up to the fetlocks
Gĩtungati	Anal end of the rectum, or lower part of the gut
Rwariũngũ	Spleen
Ini	Liver, divided into two parts
Higo	Kidney, right and left
Rabati (also called *habaya*)	Diaphragm
Ihu rĩa gĩkonyo	Ventral sac of the rumen
Gĩtũngo kĩa mara	A portion of the intentines
Mũtũra	Colon and part of the rectum, cut into eight pieces
Ihu rĩa maĩ	Dorsal sac of the rumen, or first chamber of the stomach, cut into eight pieces
Gakuo kaingĩ also called *karaguma*	*Omasum*, or third chamber of the stomach, cut into eight pieces
Ngerima	*Abomasum*, or fourth chamber of the stomach, cut into eight pieces

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Cattle Diseases

Cattle were subject to a number of diseases which the Kikuyu recognised and treated as follows.

Ngaĩ (*Probably a Mild Form of East Coast Fever*)

This complaint, in which the glands of calves swelled up, was very common, and every Kikuyu hoped that his calves would develop it while young, as it could then be cured, and those that had once had the disease in a mild form were thenceforward completely immune. If the glands did not swell when the animal was young, but later in adult life, the animal was certain to die. The treatment for this disease was to cauterise the swollen neck glands with a red hot iron (*ruoro*), or if the glands were extremely swollen, to break *mwatha* stems and put their milky juice on the glands. This caused the glands to burst and the pus to come out. The animal then recovered.

Kũharũo (*Diarrhoea*)

Cows and calves suffering from this complaint were given the blood of a ewe mixed with a little honey to drink. This usually stopped the complaint, which was an individual thing and not a disease. Burnt corn cobs were also powdered and given with water as a drink.

Ndigana (*Constipation*)

Cattle suffering from this disease were bled and given a drench made (p.247) from the bark of the *mũcagatha* tree, and a small sprig of the rock plant called *gathũũri*. These were pounded up in a mortar and put out to dry in the sun. The dry pulp was then ground to a fine powder between the grinding stones. Some of this powder was mixed with hot water and fresh milk and given to the animals to drink. It was said to be a certain cure, but the plants were rare and hard to obtain. Many cattle owners, therefore, kept some of the ground bark in gourds in their huts so as to have it on hand to treat this disease.

Gacenga (*Rinderpest*)

The Kikuyu knew of no remedy for this dreaded disease. The use of yellow water algae called *gacenga* was tried as a sympathetic magic, but without success.

Nyongo (*Gall Sickness*)

No certain cure was known, although the remedy applied to sheep was sometimes efficacious.

Nyamunya (*A Skin Disease*)

Calves sometimes suffered from a skin disease of this name, but it was not serious, and was treated only with castor oil.

Gĩũtũ (*A Hoof Disease*)

This affliction of the hooves was treated with a red hot sword tip, the sore place being cauterised.

Mũthiũrũruko (*Giddiness*)

Cattle sometimes suffered from a form of giddiness. This was treated by burning the feathers of the common kite under the animal's nose. This was said to be a certain cure.

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Mũrirũ (*Anthrax*)

This disease, for which no cure was known, occasionally appeared among Kikuyu stock, and anyone eating the flesh of an animal that had died of the disease would themselves sicken and die.

Kahũmbũrũ (*Bloat, Distended, Swollen Stomach, due to eating a lot of Wet Grass*)

This was a cattle disease which killed the animal within an hour or two of first appearing.

Mũnyũria (*Red Water and/or Rinderpest*)

When an animal came down with this disease it was given a brew of strong sugar-cane beer, mixed with the blood of a ewe and some honey. It was said that some of the animals so treated recovered, but that it is by no means a certain cure.

Thambara (*Leeches*)

Leeches sometimes entered the mouths of cattle when they were drinking at the swamps, and attached themselves to the tongue and cheeks. If this happened, the affected animal was firmly held while a man pulled out the leeches with a pair of tweezers. The wounds left where the leeches had fastened on to the animal's tongue and cheeks were treated with wood ash. The Kikuyu said that any leeches that were swallowed would concentrate in the liver of the animal and cause it to get thinner and eventually die. It is more likely, however, that animals diagnosed as having "leeches in the liver" were suffering from liver fluke. No treatment for this condition was known.

Taboos relating to Cattle, Goats and Sheep

1. The skin of an ox or a cow that had died a natural death and had not been slaughtered could not be used to make a sleeping mat for a bed.

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2. If a francolin alighted on the back of any animal, a ram had to be slaughtered and the purification ceremony of *gũthiũrũra* (encircling) performed.

3. If a cow belonging to a man of the Kikuyu initiation guild had twin calves it was killed, but if it belonged to a man of the Ũkabi guild it was allowed to live. A man of the Kikuyu guild was allowed to exchange his cow and the twin calves for a bullock if he could find a man of the Ũkabi guild willing to make the exchange, as he usually could. The Ũkabi guild people put collars round the necks of twin calves, on which cowrie shells were sewn to avert evil.

4 If a cattle owner died, all his bulls were immediately castrated and none of his cows were allowed to be served by any bulls until the *hakũro* ceremonies (freeing from the blight of death) had been performed. All his he-goats were also castrated, while his rams were segregated from the ewes.

5. Calves, as we have seen, were kept in the men's hut at night. Sometimes a young bull would actually try to mount a woman who had come to sit in the men's hut. If this happened, it was immediately slaughtered, and its flesh could not be eaten by the man's wife or by him.

6. If a stud bull left the herd while grazing, and of its own accord returned to the homestead, it was either castrated or killed, according to the circumstances. If it returned to the homestead and was caught by men, it was castrated at once, and that was enough to remove the evil. But if it came back and only women were present (who could not perform castration), and if it then returned to the herd, it would have to be slaughtered, as this was taboo.

7. If a bull went to the midden of the homestead and started to dig up the ground with its horns, that bull would have to be slaughtered at once, otherwise the owner of the homestead would die.

8. It was taboo for a menstruating woman to milk a cow.

9. If a cow or ox should get its tail twisted round a post or growing tree and so get caught, it would be immediately killed because it had "tied itself up" (*kwĩoha*).

10. If a cow gave birth to a monstrosity, the monstrosity was split in half and thrown away at the foot of a *mũthakwa* bush. The whole herd to which the cow belonged then had to be purified by the slaughter of a ram or ewe and by the ceremony of *gũthiũrũra* (encircling).

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11. The birth of twin lambs or kids and/or monstrocities to ewes or goats has been dealt with earlier.

12. If a cow, ox, or calf licked or bit a warrior's leather garment it had to be slaughtered at once.

13. If a calf or adult cow, ox, or bull reared up on its hind legs and set its front legs against a hut it had to be killed at once. This also applied to ewes, but not to goats or rams.

14. If any animal—cattle, goat, or sheep—were to go to the pot where castor oil was being prepared by women, and try to eat the mash, it would be slaughtered at once.

15. If a goat or sheep should by any chance get its horns or head caught up in a baby carrying skin, it would have to be sent to the home of the parents of the woman to whom the skin belonged, and be slaughtered there.

16. If a goat or sheep drank water from a half-gourd kept for washing a baby, it would have to be given to some non-relations to slaughter.

17. If a goat or sheep, while in a hut at night, should touch a woman's breasts, it had to be given to the woman's relatives to kill.

18. If a goat or sheep were to jump into a woman's bedroom while the woman was sleeping there with her husband, then it would have to be slaughtered next morning.

19. If a she-goat or a ewe should give birth in a hut when the woman of that hut was in labour, both the she-goat or ewe and its offspring had to be killed.

20. If a he-goat should attempt to mount a woman when she was sitting on her stool in the hut it would be slaughtered.

21. If a goat or sheep should drink sugar-cane juice while the juice was being extracted in preparation for beer, it had either to be killed or all that juice given away and not consumed by the owner or used by him for the ceremonial purpose for which he was preparing it.

Beekeeping

To complete our study of animal husbandry among the Kikuyu, we must briefly consider customs connected with the keeping of bees. They were of great importance to the Kikuyu because honey was needed for many ceremonial purposes, particularly for the brewing (p.251) of special beer to be used in connection with the more important religious sacrifices.

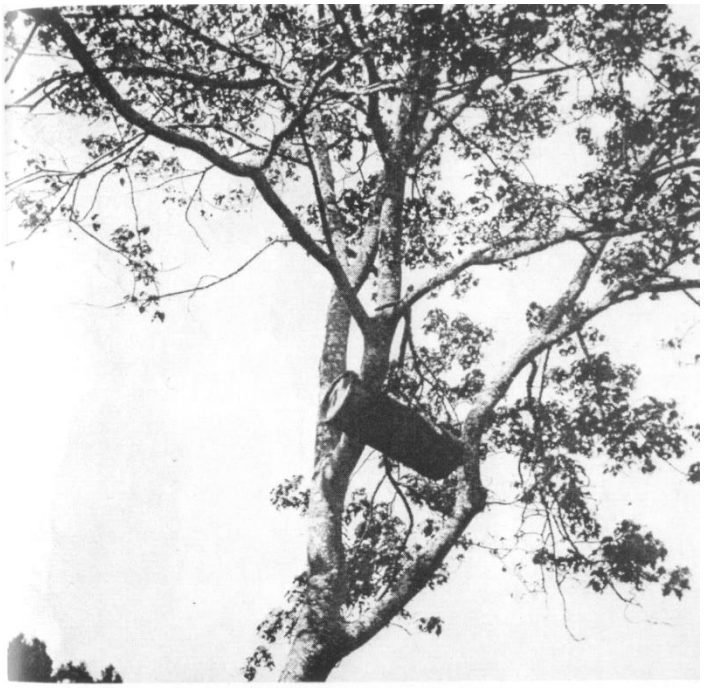

Plate 8. A beehive suspended from a stick hooked over the branch of a tree.

Not every Kikuyu was a beekeeper. Beekeeping was a more or less specialised profession which was entered by men who were not afraid to climb trees, and who were not afraid of bees. A beekeeper was called *mwanĩki*, and some of the more renowned beekeepers of the past owned up to 300 hives, while it was common for a beekeeper to have between 80 and 100 hives. In fact, hives were a great source of wealth to those who had a "knack" for beekeeping.

Some men who were not themselves beekeepers acquired a small number of hives and got a friend who was a beekeeper to put them up, tend them, and harvest the honey for them. In return for this service, the beekeeper was entitled to demand a fee of beer called *njohi ya mathambio*, or if the beer was honey beer, *ũũkĩ wa mathambio* (the weaker second brew).

The making of hives from solid tree logs will be discussed fully in Chapter 9. Here we will confine ourselves to the actual customs connected with beekeeping.

Every beehive, having been made by a woodworker and handed over to the man who ordered it, was marked with the latter's ownership mark. This was done with a branding iron (*ruoro*). This brand was put on the under side of the hive so that when one was standing under a tree and looking

up, the mark was clearly visible and no one could have any excuse for taking honey from someone else's hive.

Before a hive was taken out to be put up for the first time, the beekeeper lit a small fire in his homestead, on which he put leaves of either *mũkũri*, *karaara na ithe*, or *kogoge*, together with some seed pods of castor oil berries (*makubu*), and some goat fat which had been partially rendered down (*ngurunyu*). The hive was placed over the smoke rising from this fire so that the sweet smelling smoke from the herbs permeated every corner of the hive.

The hive was then carried by a woman to the tree where it was to be placed, and there further ceremonies were enacted. Before describing these, we must mention the two different ways of putting a hive up in a tree. The first and simplest method was to fix the hive in a natural position formed by the forking branches of a tree. Such a site was called *ndumbĩ*, and the time having been in the forked branches, was tied firmly with creepers of the liana called *mũũgũ*. The other method was to suspend the hive by means of a special beehive hanging stick (*mbogoro*). This had a crook at one end and an inverted Y-shaped base, and had a total length of about 2ft. It was fairly easy to find a branch of a tree that could be adapted easily into a hanging stick, and the (p.252) most suitable woods were *mũrema-mũthũa*, *mũngirima* and *mũremba*. Occassionally *mũrema-mũthũa* was used.

The hive was fastened to this hanging stick with *mũũgũ* lianas. When a hive had been taken to the chosen tree, the beekeeper removed his skin cloak and worked naked. First of all, he lit another small fire using fire sticks or embers from a garden fire. (Some men brought the fire for this purpose from a men's hut, but never from a woman's hut). On to this fire he put leaves of either *mũkũri*, or *kogoge*, and then put the hive over the fire so that the smoke permeated it. While he did so he whistled to call the bees, invoking the different species of bee by name as he did so. The Kikuyu recognised three species of bee: *hinga*, *ndambarari*, and *hũgĩ*. Having finished smoking the hive, the man fastened up the end of it with its special plank (*hengero*), and pushed a small bunch of *makũri* or *kogoge* leaves into the cracks between the walls of the hive and the plank that formed the lid. This done, the beekeeper climbed into the selected tree, taking with him one end of a long leather thong, the other end of which was fastened to the hive or to the hanging stick so that he would pull the hive up into position All the time he was climbing and while he was fixing the hive in position, he had to continue to whistle to the bees to come to his hive, calling the different species by name and also speaking to the "bees of the air" in general. When the hive was set in position and the beekeeper had climbed down again he had to hit the stem of the tree with the end of his thong saying, "*Mũrũmie ndĩĩra na ndĩgathame*". This brief prayer was addressed to the spirits of the trees and meant in effect, "Keep the bees (when they come) and don't let them move away".

A Kikuyu beekeeper did not restrict his hives to his own land or even to the family estate, but scattered them far and wide all over the country so as to get the benefit of the various flowering wild plants and crops. If a man put his hive in a tree on someone else's cultivated land, he had to tell him that he had done so, but if it was in bush or forest he need not do so. If the tree in which the hive was set was in a cultivated plot, it was customary to give the owner of the land some of the honey each time it was harvested.

In a Kikuyu hive the bees suspended their combs from the upper part of the wall of the barrel, and it was considered unlucky if the combs were also fastened to the bottom; they should hang free. If a beekeeper found the combs in a hive attached at the bottom as well as to the top, he harvested

that honey but did not use any of it himself; he gave it to a friend. There was a saying, "*Rũnyango ndũngĩthecithio*", ('The base of the hive should not be pierced,' i.e. touched by honey comb).

p.253
When a beekeeper went to harvest his honey he took some leather bag (*mondo*) made of the skins of forest duiker or calf, but not of sheep or goat, and he also took his long leather thong, a sharp knife, and a bark torch made from the bark of *mũtarakwa* and *mũtei*. This was for smoking the bees while he took the honey.

The method of smoking bees was to open the back end of the hive barrel, and blow smoke in. The bees then went out through the entrance holes at the other end, and formed a swarm on the branches until the man had finished! (I have seen this happen, strange as it may sound).

A hanging stick hive was unhitched and lowered to the ground to have the honey taken from it, but a hive in the natural fork of a tree was harvested aloft. No beekeeper ever took the whole of any comb, but cut off each comb near the top where it was attached to the roof of the hive, always leaving a little bit behind.

If he was working on the ground, he handed each comb as he cut it out to his assistant, who brushed off any adhering bees before putting it into a bag. If working aloft, a beekeeper brushed off each comb himself as he cut it, before putting it into the bag, and lowered the bag when it was full, to his assistant below.

If any man stole honey from the hive of another and was found out, he was fined ten goats and one stall-fed ram (*ngoima*). As most people used magic to protect their hives, stealing honey was rare, even though the hives were widely scattered.

If a man accidentally set fire to a tree containing a hive while clearing land for cultivation, he had to pay a fine of one ewe and one-stall-fattened ram.

No man could see his bees, but only the hive which contained them. In fact, if a man wished to sell a hive already occupied by bees, he had to go, and in the presence of the buyer, turn all the bees out on to the ground. If they re-occupied the same hive of their own accord after it had changed ownership, that was well and good, but bees could not be sold against their will.

If the bees of any person's hive stung another person so severely that he or she died, the owner was responsible to the amount of half the normal compensation for death (see Chapter 23).

No man who had put up a new hive could have intercourse with wife that night when he returned home; he had to keep to himself until the following night.

If the bees of any hive proved to be vicious, the owner would kill a sheep or goat and put the top of its skull into the hive. After this, it was believed that the bees would become docile.

p.254
If a hive became inhabited by bees while it was inside a homestead waiting to be taken out to a tree, an animal had to be slaughtered and the blood poured over the hive in order to purify it.

When a new hive had been occupied by bees for the first the beekeeper had to go "to give the bees a name" (*tua njũkĩ rĩtwa*). He opened the end of the hive and looked in to see whether the swarm was a big one or a small one, and also to see which species of bee they were. Having ascertained these two matters, he cut off a little bit of the honey-comb that the bees had started to make, rubbed a little honey on the bole of the tree, ate a little, and put a small bit in his bag to symbolize the

taking of the honey harvest. He addressed the bees by the name of their species to show them that he had recognised them, and by these ceremonies made friends with them. The cutting of the little bit of comb was called *kũgĩrima*, and represented his ownership of the bees, just as a man would *gĩrima* his cattle and sheep by cutting their ears so that everyone would know that they were his.

In addition to the practice of beekeeping, as carried out by specialists, every Kikuyu was keen to obtain wild honey. Any man who found a wild bees' nest in a hollow tree or rock either took the honey himself or called in someone braver and more skilled than he to aid him in doing it in return for a share of the honey.

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Introduction

In the two foregoing chapters we have examined Kikuyu methods of agriculture and animal husbandry, and we must now examine the ways in which the products of these activities were prepared for consumption. We will also consider the customs and ceremonies connected with food and drink.

Since the Kikuyu were keen agriculturists, it is only natural that their chief source of food should be vegetable, but it would be a grave mistake to assume that they subsisted entirely on a vegetarian diet. While it is true that no Kikuyu ever thought of meat, blood, or milk as food, he nevertheless consumed a quantity of these, and, as far as the men of the tribe were concerned, there is no doubt that in the course of a year they ate, on an average, considerably more meat than an average European man does. But this meat eating was erratic, a great deal being consumed at irregular intervals instead of a little at regular ones. The women and children also ate meat at irregular intervals but on the whole they ate much less than the men, for the parts of an animal usually given to the women and children amounted per person to less than those, given to the men, as we shall see when we examine the principles upon which meat was divided. Furthermore, there were many occasions when meat was available for men only, and no women were even present. On the other hand, those vegetable products that formed the chief source of food supply were controlled mainly by the women.

There is a common belief among Europeans that the Kikuyu diet was monotonous and unvaried, but this was not true, although the variety of dishes was certainly small compared with those of a

European community. Let us first briefly examine the principal ways of preparing vegetable foods, almost all of which were prepared by women, and then we will turn to the cooking of meat, soups, milk, and other foods.

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Vegetable Foods

An exhaustive list of Kikuyu methods of preparing vegetable foods is not possible, for they varied from family to family, but an account of the more widely recognised dishes will give some indication of the nature of the foods available.

Most of the cereals and legumes grown by the Kikuyu could be cooked in a variety of ways, as will be seen from the descriptions listed below. To avoid confusion, it should be noted that some words occur several times in this list, according to what their basic ingredients were. For instance *ũcũrũ* means gruel, and gruel was of many kinds and made from any of the grains and even from sweet potatoes, though the flavour of each was distinct. The various kinds of gruel are listed under the cereal used to make them.

***Mbembe* (*Maize*)**

Mbembe cia Mabuto

This dish consisted of green maize cobs roasted in their outer sheaths in hot ashes. The effect was to steam the maize cobs in their own moisture. Young green maize cooked in this way retained all its flavour and was much appreciated. This method was used not only by the women when preparing the family meals at night, but also by people out in the fields when weeding or scaring birds from the crops.

Mbembe cia Ngara

Maize that was beginning to ripen, but not absolutely hard, was roasted without the outer sheaths by standing the cobs near a fire to toast them. The cobs were constantly turned so as to be toasted and browned all round. Maize so treated was crisp and required good teeth, and was therefore not eaten by old people, but it was sometimes prepared in this way by women for the evening meal and also, casually, by men and women in the fields.

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Mbembe cia Mĩtungo

Maize that had been harvested and stored on the cob was sometimes boiled as it was for several hours and then eaten from the cob. When maize was cooked by this method, either soda or papyrus salt was put in the water to flavour it. It was cooked in this way only by women, as the cooking had to be done in large pots and had to be carefully tended. No man would do this work.

Gĩtheri or Mũtheri

Maize that had been harvested and stored on the cob was sometimes decobbed and cooked whole with either lablab beans (*njahĩ*) or pigeon peas (*njũgũ*). Soda or papyrus salt was used for flavouring.

Irio

Maize mixed with either *njahĩ* beans or pigeon peas was often cooked until soft and then green bananas were added. All the ingredients were boiled together and then mashed. This dish was eaten either hot or cold and was always cooked with soda or papyrus salt.

Irio cia Nyeni

Maize and either *njahĩ* beans or pigeon peas were sometimes cooked until soft and then mashed with spinach instead of green bananas. The spinach was cooked by steaming it on top of the boiling maize and beans, after which it was mashed up with the other ingredients. Here again, soda or papyrus salt was added.

Ũcũrũ wa Matiba

To make maize gruel, a quantity of maize was removed from the cobs (*gũthandũra*) and soaked for about 24 hours. Then it was put into the wooden mortars and pounded until it was considerably broken up. This broken maize was lifted out of the mortar into a big half-gourd of water and washed so that the finer particles remained in the water. The coarse (p.258) material was lifted out of the water pounded again, and the process repeated with the same water, so the water became more and more clouded with fine powdered maize flour. After the process had been repeated about four times, the coarsest maize fragments were about the size of broken rice. These were put on to the saddle quern, ground between the stones into wet pulp, and then added to the water and powdered maize. A little sorghum (*mũhĩa*) grain was also ground on the stones, mixed with cold water, and added to the maize water. This whole brew of uncooked gruel was set aside to stand for 24 hours, by which time it had fermented slightly and was a little bitter. Then it was ready to be cooked as required. That part of it which was not cooked would keep for several days, but once cooked it did not keep. No soda or salt was put into the gruel, which was flavoured only by fermentation.

***Mwere* (*Bulrush Millet*)**

Ũcũrũ

Plate 9. Pounding corn in a wooden mortar and grinding with grindstones

Gruel made from bulrush millet was a favourite food, and one which was used on many ceremonial occasions. For this reason, before the first bulrush millet of the new season was taken from the fields, the sacrifice of a ram had to take

place, and the first bulrush millet to be cooked had to be made into gruel. This was done by pounding the grain lightly in a mortar and then winnowing it to remove the husks, after which it was pounded and ground (*kia*), and made into gruel, as already described for maize. Gruel having been made from the first fruits of this millet, the rest of the crop could be cooked, if desired, in other ways, but *ũcũrũ* was the most popular dish made from this grain.

Kĩmere

Wet bulrush millet that had been husked and partially ground was sometimes made into raw cakes called *kĩmere***,** and eaten in this form.

Mote

This was made by husking the grain and grinding it to a dry flour without soaking. This flour was made into a thick gruel and flavoured with soda.

p.259
Ngima

Flour made by grinding dry, husked bulrush millet was made into this thick porridge for the older men. This was mixed with sheeps' fat and eaten either cold or hot.

Mwere Mũkonyore

When the grain had been husked, it was sometimes sun parched and eaten raw like *mbaria* (parched sorghum). Warriors were partial to bulrush millet in this form for taking on journeys.

Mũharario

This fine flour was sometimes made by dry grinding unhusked bulrush millet and winnowing out the bran. This was generally used to make gruel but it was also eaten raw by children.

Mũkiro see Mũkiro of Mwere below.

***Mũkombi* (*Foxtail Millet*)**

Ũcũrũ

Gruel was made from this grain in the same way as that described for bulrush millet, and sometimes bulrush millet and foxtail millet were mixed before making gruel.

Kĩmere kĩa Mũkombi

Kĩmere was also made from foxtail millet, as well as from bulrush millet, but papyrus salt had to be added to make it eatable.

Mũkombi Mũkonyore

This was treated in the same way as *mwere mukonyore*.

p.260
Ngima ya Mũkombi

This was quite different from *ngima ya mwere*, which was made from flour. In the case of *mũkombi*, the grain was husked, then boiled whole, and mashed up with fat or with papyrus salt.

Mũkiro of Mwere or Mũkombi

A dish called *mũkiro* consisted of either bulrush or foxtail millet grain husked and ground to dry flour and then cooked with water to a thick porridge, rather like *mote* (see Bulrush Millet), but distinct from *ngima ya ũgĩmbĩ* (see Finger Millet).

Ūgĩmbĩ (*Finger Millet*)

Ngima

The principal dish made from finger millet was a thick porridge made by first husking the grain, and then grinding it to a dry flour which was made into *ngima* with a quantity of sheep's fat.

Ūcũrũ

Gruel made from finger millet was made by mixing in some sorghum grain with it, and then soaking, pounding, and grinding it *kia*. It did not make good gruel without sorghum, and even when mixed with it, it had to have mutton fat added to make it tasty.

Gĩthambio kĩa Ũgĩmbĩ

This was made in a similar way to the sorghum *gĩthambio*, but the gourd with the uncooked gruel in it was put to ferment in the sun, whereas the *gĩthambio* made from sorghum, if put in the sun, fermented too much and overflowed. It was used in exactly the same way.

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Mũhĩa (*Sorghum*)

Mũthũra

When sorghum was not yet ripe, but was fully swollen and developed, the women picked some heads from time to time to make a dish called *mũthũra*. The heads of corn were rubbed between the palms of the hands to get the grain off them. This green grain was then boiled with *njahĩ* beans (also unripe) and some spinach, or else with green bananas instead of spinach, and a little soda or papyrus salt. This was particularly favoured by women and children, but men did not like it so much. It was prepared only by women.

Gĩtheri kĩa Mũhĩa

Unripe sorghum was also boiled plain after being rubbed from the heads as described above, and it was a favourite dish with women and girls. No soda or papyrus salt was needed.

Mũtũmbũrũ

Green, unripe sorghum, having been rubbed from the ears, was sometimes pounded to a pulp in the wooden mortars, and then cooked into a stiff gruel called *mũtũmbũrũ*. Old men preferred green sorghum cooked in this way to either of the ways mentioned above. This thick gruel had no soda or papyrus salt put with it to flavour it, the green corn having a special flavour of its own which would be spoilt by condiments.

Mbaria

Sorghum of the variety called *mũruge* (and to some extent the variety called *mwerũ*), was eaten raw when it was quite dry, after being rubbed off the ears in a winnowing tray. It was sun parched, hard, and crisp, and had a pleasant flavour. It was used chiefly when food was required at short notice, or for carrying on a journey, and was the favourite food (p.262) carried by warriors on a raid, as it needed no cooking or preparation. This parched sorghum was comparable to European biscuits.

Kĩgume

Sorghum of the *mũruge* or *mwerũ* varieties was sometimes soaked whole in water that had a quantity of soda in it. After it had been soaked for 24 hours, and had swollen considerably, it was taken out and parched in the hot sun on a winnowing tray. It was then eaten raw as parched corn, but owing to its being soaked in soda it had a special flavour of its own. Sorghum in this form was not only a food that could be kept for immediate use without further preparation, but it also had a medicinal value, being used as a vermifuge for certain types of intestinal parasite.

Ndite

Sorghum was sometimes ground into dry flour between the grinding stones. This process was called *gũthĩa*, as distinct from grinding it wet, called *gũkia*. The dry flour was then used to make a gruel (*ndite*) without soda.

Ũcũrũ wa Mũhĩa

To make this sorghum gruel, the grain was first soaked for about 24 hours. It was then ground and washed so as to let the finer matter go into the water. The coarse, unbroken particles were ground again and again until the whole had been ground so fine that it mixed into the water. This was then set to stand in the sun for five or six hours, after which it was stood inside the hut overnight and was ready to be cooked into gruel next day. Slight fermentation made it bitter and no soda or papyrus salt was added. Only the amount required for immediate use was cooked, as the remainder would keep uncooked for several days without fermenting further. This dish was prepared only by women.

Plate 10. Kikuyu pots.

Ngima

Dry sorghum grain was also ground to a fine flour, and this was then (p.263) cooked into a thick porridge to which sheep's fat was added. This dish was specially prepared for older men and was eaten hot or cold. No soda or papyrus salt was added.

Gĩthambio

Sorghum grain was ground into a coarse, dry flour and put into a large gourd. Water was added, and then the gourd was thoroughly shaken and set to stand in the shade. The contents were a thick, uncooked gruel which fermented slightly. When gruel was required for drinking, a pot of water

was put on the fire, and as it boiled, a little of the fermented *gĩthambio* was poured into it. It quickly thickened into a thin porridge with a special flavour which was very popular. The *gĩthambio*, once prepared as described above, would keep uncooked for more than a month, and gruel could be made from it in about ten minutes. It was therefore kept as a stand-by for making gruel at short notice, which could not be done by the other methods.

Kĩmera

Sorghum grain was sometimes soaked in an open mouthed pot for three or four days until it sprouted little green shoots (*mĩkuha*) about 1in. long. As soon as it had thus sprouted, the grain was taken out of the water and set on winnowing trays to dry in the sun. When very dry, it was ground into flour, sprouts and all. This flour was stored and used as required to make *kimera*, a slightly bitter gruel with a special flavour due to the sprouting. This dish was prepared by women only.

Mũthigo

Sorghum of the variety known as *mũthakame* (which could not be used to make *mbaria* because of its bitterness) was taken to a rocky patch of ground near a river, and there it was rubbed on the stones by hand until all outer surface and husk had been removed and only the white kernel was left. This was eaten raw. It was a special dish prepared by initiated girls (*airĩtu*) for themselves, and for the young men. It was even more tasty than *mbaria* (parched sorghum), but took some time to prepare. The girls who prepared it often took it as a special titbit for their (p.264) lovers to eat with their ordinary evening meal. Sorghum was also used with maize; see *Ũcũrũ wa Matiba*.

***Ngwacĩ* (*Sweet Potato*)**

Ngario

Young sweet potatoes of a fresh crop were often eaten raw by people working in the fields.

Hĩĩhio

Sweet potatoes were roasted in the hot ashes without being peeled, and eaten either hot or cold.

Ndugo

Sweet potatoes were also boiled, either peeled or unpeeled, and eaten plain.

Baranĩki

The sweet potatoes of the variety known as *mũndoro* were made into special form of gruel known as *baranĩki*. For this the potatoes were first boiled in their skins, then peeled, mashed, put into another pot with more water, and stirred. The resulting "potato soup" was repeatedly stirred with the *kĩbĩri* (stirrer), and all the coarse fibres in the potatoes removed so that the whole was reduced to the consistency of thin gruel. It was much favoured by old men, who added mutton fat to it.

***Gĩkwa* (*Yam*)**

Yams were cooked in only two ways, *ndugo* (boiled), and *hĩĩhio* (roasted).

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***Njahĩ* (*Lablab Bean*)**

Gĩtheri

Njahĩ beans were often cooked with papyrus salt and eaten unmashed as a dish by themselves.

Irio

The commonest use of the *njahĩ* bean was as an ingredient of the dish known as *irio*. This was made by cooking and mashing *njahĩ* beans together with various other ingredients. The ingredients might be beans and green bananas, or beans and spinach, but sometimes beans, spinach, green bananas, and maize were all cooked together. In all these forms the dish was called *irio*, but when cooked with only bananas it was also called *njahĩ cia athoni*, and was a special dish used in connection with marriage negotiations. See also under *Mbembe* (Maize).

Mũthũra see *Mũhĩa* (Sorghum) below.

***Njũgũ* (*Pigeon or Bush Pea*)**

Gĩtheri

When pigeon peas were fully developed but not dry enough for the ordinary harvest, some were picked, shelled, cooked with papyrus salt, and eaten as a dish by themselves.

Kĩmitũ

Dry harvested pigeon peas were boiled for a long time with soda and then mashed into a kind of pease pudding called *kĩmitũ*.

p.266
Irio

Pigeon peas were also an ingredient for the dish called *irio*, taking the place of *njahĩ* beans, with which they were never mixed in the old days. *Irio* made from pigeon peas was either made with green bananas or with bananas and maize, and seldom, if ever, mixed with spinach.

***Thoroko* (*Cowpea*)**

Thoroko Ngime

Cowpeas were boiled till very soft and then mashed with either cooked green bananas or maize cooked to a pulp. This dish was called *thoroko ngime*, which means "mashed up *thoroko*", but it was also sometimes called *irio*.

***Ngĩna, also called Thuu* (*Green Gram*)**

Green gram was boiled until soft and then mashed with mutton fat and called *ngĩna ya thuu* or *irio cia thuu*.

***Mboco* (*Kidney Bean*)**

Gĩtheri

When the kidney beans were fully developed but before they were hard and dry, they were picked, shelled, and cooked with papyrus salt as a dish by themselves. They were, in fact, the chief dish eaten at the time of shortage before the season's main crops were ready.

Irio

Kidney beans were also used for making the dish called *irio*, taking (p.267) the place of *njahĩ* or pigeon peas, and mixed and mashed either with bananas and maize, or with maize and spinach.

***Ndũma* (*Edible Arum*)**

The edible arum was prepared only by boiling. It had to boil for six or seven hours before it was edible.

***Kĩgwa* (*Sugar-cane*)**

Sugarcane, in addition to being used for making beer, was chewed to extract the juice.

***Irigũ* (*Banana*)**

Meru (*Ripe Bananas*)

These were eaten raw. When a bunch had ripened on the tree sufficiently for an upper "hand" of bananas to turn slightly yellow and to be attacked by birds, it was cut down and all the fruit pulled off. These bananas were laid in the sun for a few hours and thoroughly warmed. Then either a hole in the ground, or a big cooking pot, was lined with leaves of *mũkũrũwe* or *mũigoya*, which had also been warmed in the sun. The bananas were put in and covered with more leaves. In the case of a hole in the ground, earth was put on top; in the case of a pot it was covered over. The warmth generated by the decaying leaves ripened the bananas to perfection in about four days. Sometimes women used sugar-cane pulp in place of leaves.

Hĩĩhio

Green bananas that were fully formed but not ready for ripening were roasted in the ashes, having first been peeled. The following were roasting varieties: *mũnjũũ*, *mũthĩrĩrĩ*, *mũtika*, and *mũcuuru*.

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Irio

As we have seen, green bananas were extensively used in preparing the various forms of *irio*. They were peeled for this purpose and then cut up and boiled. The best varieties for using in this way were *mũtahato*, *mũthĩrĩrĩ*, and *mũtika*.

Ngima

Green bananas of the *mũtahato* variety were also boiled and mashed with mutton fat and eaten as a dish by themselves.

Gĩtaũ

A favourite boys' food made from bananas was called *gĩtaũ*. Boys would fetch a bunch of bananas ready for ripening and ripen it as described above in a hole in the ground. When the bananas were ripe they cut a second bunch and roasted these as described above. Then they used a stem of sugar-cane to mash the ripe and the roasted bananas together on a bit of green banana bark (*igoto*).

Mũtu wa Marigũ

In time of food shortage, green bananas were peeled and put to dry in the sun. They were then broken up in the mortar and ground into fine flour (*mũtu wa marigũ*) on the grinding stones. To conserve sorghum corn, this flour was mixed with sorghum flour and used to make gruel (*ũcũrũ*) or thick porridge (*ngima*). Banana flour was also made in quantities in times when there was no food shortage, and it was then used for trade with the Maasai, who greatly appreciated it. (See Chapter 13).

***Nyeni* (*Spinach*)**

The various leaves used as spinach were only eaten mixed with other foodstuffs in *irio* as already mentioned.

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***Mũũnyũ wa Irura* (*Papyrus Salt*)**

Papyrus salt was made exclusively by women, who went to a papyrus swamp, cut large quantities of papyrus, and left it to dry. Some days later they returned in the morning and made a framework platform of green papyrus (like a roasting platform), and on this they piled small, tightly tied bundles of dry papyrus stems and leaves (bundles about 2ft. and 6in).. When these had been piled up to a height of about 3ft. they were set aflame, and when these had burned down, more bundles were piled on, and still more. In the early afternoon the women splashed water from half-gourds on to the smouldering ash until it was cool. This ash formed layers, caked together, each representing one level of the different piled up bundles. These cakes were broken into slabs and carried home in open wicker baskets (*ngara*). They were stowed in a special granary (*ikũmbĩ*), or else in a special shed under the eaves. This papyrus charcoal was black and was used for cooking just as it was, not wetted and strained as was done by other tribes. The women who burned it sold it for an equivalent quantity of corn in small half-gourds.

Fruits

The following wild fruits were commonly eaten: *ndare* (blackberries), *ngambura* (the fruit of the *mũkambura* tree—*Doryalis abyssinica*), *ngawa* (the fruit of the *mũkawa* bush—*Carissa edulis*), *mbirũ* (the fruit of the *mũbirũ* tree—*Vangueria* spp)., and *thĩga* (the fruit of the *mũthĩga* tree—*Warburgia densis*). The tubers of a plant called *mũgathũ* (unidentified) were eaten raw by herdsmen; these were called *ngathũ*. The stem of the plant called *kĩgagatio* (*Rumex abyssinicus*) was commonly chewed for the sake of its juice by both herdsmen and boys. The fruits of a Cucurbit, or plant of the cucumber family, called *rũkiri* (*Mormordica* sp). were also eaten, as were the fruits of the *mũtuuya* (wild mulberry tree—*Myrianthus holstii*). In times of famine, the seeds of *itindiĩ* (*Setaria verticillata*), *mũkenia* (*Lantana trifolia*), *mũkandu* (*Lippia* sp)., and others were eaten in addition to the wild fruits and roots mentioned above.

The juice of the wild date palm (*mũkĩndũ* or *mũthũthi*) was not only used in famine, but in any season when the sun was fierce and food was scarce. This palm juice (*ũthũthi*) was regarded as a food rather than a drink. The upper part of the palm was cut off and a cup-shaped hollow excavated (p.270) (*gũkũrũta*) in the pith. This hollow was covered over with some leaves and left for about six hours, by which time it would be full of juice due to the rising of the sap. This was scooped out and consumed, and the base of the hollow scraped a little more and left for the cavity to fill up again. A palm went on producing this juice for days. Such juice was often fetched from a considerable distance and carried home in gourds.

The Preparation of Animal Products for Consumption

We now turn from vegetables and fruits to the cooking of meat and cattle products, such as blood and milk. As has been said several times, meat was not regarded strictly as food, but the eating of meat from time to time was regarded as essential, so in addition to animals slaughtered in connection with sacrifice and ceremony, goats, sheep, and cattle were sometimes killed for meat feasts, which will be described presently, and sometimes killed for meat for the homestead as a whole.

Meat was eaten either grilled over hot ashes, or boiled, according to the customs connected with the meat available. In certain situations, practically the whole of an animal was cooked by grilling, while in other circumstances it was mostly boiled. In general, however, there were certain recognised parts of an animal that were grilled, and others that were boiled. The usual procedure will be described here, and any exceptions to the general rule will be so indicated.

Ordinarily, when a goat or sheep was killed in the homestead and the meat divided up, the following portions were grilled and shared as follows (the joints have been described in Chapter 7):

a. For the married men: one half-saddle joint (*ikengeto*), both testes (*heke*), half the liver (*ini*), the rectal or anal end of the gut (*gitungati*), a piece of the small intestine with a piece of the posterior colon with supporting membranes (*gĩtũngo*), and the *ceacuffl* (*kiboroboro*).

b. For the warriors: the other *ikengeto* joint, the dorsal sac of the rumen or first chamber of the stomach (*ihu rĩa maĩ*), and the *jejunum* with a piece of the posterior colon and supporting membranes (*ruoya*).

c. For the uninitiated boys: one joint consisting of the last cervical and the first four thoracic vertebrae (*mũkua-tũhũ*), and the *subcutaneous fascia*, or tough meaty tissue just below the ribs (*ngaĩ*).

d. For the women and girls: the other half of the liver (*ini*), the *ileum* with a piece of the posterior colon and the pancreas and (p.271) duodenum with supporting membranes (*tama* or *gĩtũngũrũ*), and the spiral, anterior portion of the colon (*wei*).

e. For the children: the kidneys (*higo*), the diaphragm (*habaya*), and the spleen (*rwariũngũ*).

The remaining joints were all boiled, after which they were divided up as follows:

a. For the married men: a joint consisting of the sacrum with the lumbar and caudal vertebrae attached (*rũcuthĩ*), and the head (*mũtwe*).

b. For the warriors: both *ciĩga* (singular *kĩĩga*), each consisting of the first three ribs with part of the sternum attached, the breast (*gĩthũri kĩirũ*), and the lungs (*mahũri*).

c For the uninitiated boys: the neck (*ngingo*), the four feet (*mathagiro*), the heart (*ngoro*), and the reticulum or second chamber of the stomach (*kahu kanini*).

d. For the women and children together: both hind legs (*magũrũ*) and both forelegs with the *scapulae* attached (*moko*), the pelvic girdle with part of the meat from each leg attached (*honge*), the *abomasum* or fourth chamber of the stomach (*ngerima*), and the *omasum* or third chamber of the stomach (*gakuo kaingĩ* or *karaguma*).

The ears with some meat attached were always given by the married men to the uninitiated girls of the village, who, of course, also shared the women's portion.

The division of the various joints catalogued above was ordained by ancient custom, and was a matter of definite rights. The meat having been so apportioned, the members of any group could give any of their portions to anyone else they liked, or could eat it all themselves. A boy, for instance, might give part of his to friends or his own age-group, or, if he so wished, to the other boys of his own home. Similarly, if there were not many women, they gave part of their share to the boys and men. But the fact remains that the portions mentioned were theirs to do with as they liked.

As far as actual weight was concerned, the women's portion of any goat or sheep was the biggest one, and this reflected the fact that in most Kikuyu homes the women and girls constituted the largest single group. The males were divided into three groups (married men, warriors, and boys) who each had their separate portions, while married women, uninitiated girls, and initiated girls were all classed together for purposes of meat division. On the whole the females got a slightly smaller amount of meat per individual.

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Preparing the Meat of Goats and Sheep

Meat that was to be grilled was laid upon a roasting platform (*ndara*) built over a fire. The best woods with which to build such a roast platform (*ndara*) were *mũthakwa*, *mũcatha*, *mũkeũ*, *muondwe*, *mũkũngũgũ*, *mwarîki*, and *mũrigono*.

Alternatively, the meat was grilled on large skewers, one end of which was stuck into the ground at an angle of 45° so as to lean over the embers. For the skewers (*njobe* or *njibe*) the best woods were *mũtathi*, *mũkarakinga*, *mũhĩndahĩndĩ*, *mũkeũ*, *muondwe*, *mũngirima*, *mũtamaiyũ*, *mũnderendu*, *mũkinyai*.

Meat for boiling was put into cold water, each joint having been treated with *mũkeũ* bark. The ends of these thongs were left hanging out of pot so as to be used to pull out the joints when cooked.

Marrow

The limb bones of goats and sheep were always split open so that marrow could either be eaten, or put into the soup that was always made from the water in which the boiled joints had been cooked. Limb bones were split longitudinally so that the marrow would go into the soup. In the case of roasted limb joints, after eating the meat a man would cut off the articular ends of the bone with his sword, put one end of the bone shaft to his mouth, and suck the marrow through.

Black Puddings

Certain of the intestines, as we have seen in the chapter on goats and sheep, were always filled with blood and bits of meat, fat, and papyrus salt, to make a kind of sausage or black pudding. These were laid on the roasting platform and grilled, except for the sausages from the ventral sac of the rumen (*mũromo wa ihu*) and the *abomasum* or fourth chamber of the stomach (*ngerima*), which were always boiled.

Fat

The fat from every animal, and especially that of the breast (*gĩthũri*), thigh (*kĩero*), the layer of fat and tissue off the back of the sacrum, (p.273) pelvis (*rĩũa*), and the tail (*gĩthita*), was always rendered down and put into a bottle gourd (*kĩnandũ*). The *ngarango* (pieces of meat from which the fat had been extracted by frying) were eaten by women and children.

Meat Feasts

Sheep and. Goats

In the case of a sheep or a goat slaughtered for the purposes of a special great feast, the division of the joints was quite different from usual, and such an animal was not slaughtered in the homestead, but out in the bush or down in a cave by the river. The general customs relating to meat feasts must first be mentioned before we can consider the division of the meat.

When a man felt that he was in need of a tonic, he decided to have a meat feast, and this was true whether he was a married man or a young unmarried warrior. The latter category held meat feasts far more often than the married man, because the elders constantly had meat available in connection with ceremonial rites and the administration of justice.

Having decided that he would like a meat feast, a man talked to the men of his own age-group and collected four or five of them to share in it. They usually arranged that each would provide one castrated he-goat, except for one man, who had to provide a ram to be consumed at the end of the feast "to cool the he-goats" (*ya kũhoria thenge*). When four or five men had thus decided to have a meat feast and had chosen the day on which it would start, they met down by a stream, either in a banana grove, at a small cave, or in the bush. Here they constructed a small shelter (or in the case of a cave, built a rough wall across the front), which they occupied until the feast was over. Every member of the feast had to sleep in the shelter or cave for the duration of the feast, for it was strictly taboo for anyone participating in such a feast to go and sleep at the home and to have any contact, let alone sexual intercourse, with a wife, or with any other woman or girl.

If circumstance arose that made it necessary for a man to go to his home to sleep during meat feast, he would delegate some friend of his to take his place at the feast and to be there continually until it was over. In some cases, if a man had urgent business, he could return to a meat feast after going to his home for a night, provided that he had slept in the men's hut, and had not had intercourse with any of his wives, or, in case of a warrior, had not had restricted intercourse (*nguĩko*) with a girl.

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At a meat feast the goats and the ram slaughtered were not cut up and jointed according to the method already described in Chapter 7, because the meat was not for any sacrificial, ceremonial, or ritual purpose. The animal was suffocated, bled, and skinned in the ordinary manner, and then one foot (*ithagiro*) was removed from a foreleg, and one foot from the opposite hindleg. This done, the layer of fat and tissue off the back of the sacrum and pelvis (*rĩũa*), and the *subcutaneous fascia* or tough meaty tissue covering the animal just below the ribs (*ngaĩ*), were both removed, as well as the sinews (*nga*). Then a sword was used to cut through all the ribs at their junction with the vertebral column on either side. The neck was now severed from the vertebral column at the end of the cervical vertebrae, but only the bone was cut through. The head and neck were left attached to the carcass by the flesh on the lower side. The vertebral column was then drawn aside sufficiently to expose the lungs and heart, which were removed, and any blood in the cavity was taken out to be used for making soup (*thathi*) later on.

This done, the carcass was raised up by the hind legs and these were cut off in such a way that the whole hind quarters, together with the whole vertebral column up to the top of the dorsal vertebrae, was removed in one piece. Next the stomach and intestines were removed from the fore part of the carcass, which was on the ground.

Then both the forelegs were cut away at the top of the humeri. After this the upper part of the sternum (*kabuutu*) was removed. The breast meat of either side was then separated from the *makengeto* (the half saddle joints, singular *ikengeto*), and the neck and head were cut off. This breast meat was left attached to the flesh over the stomach and the testes. The stomach and intestines were divided up as in the case of sacrificial animal.

The main backbone (*ihĩndĩ rĩa arĩithi*) was then severed from the hindquarters at the sacrum, and was split in half to be used for making soup. The legs were cut off from the pelvis at the heads of the femora, and the sacrum and pelvic girdle cut into two halves down the middle line.

The jointing having been thus completed, the meat was divided up as follows. The man who provided the animal was given the skin (*rũũa*), the *abomasum* or fourth chamber of the stomach (*ngerima*), the four feet (*mathagiro*), the intestines (*mara*), half the liver (*ini*), the neck (*ngingo*), kidneys (*higo*), the head (*mũtwe*), the spiral, anterior portion of the colon (*wei*), the diaphragm (*habaya*), and the spleen (*rwariũngũ*). Of these joints he retained the head at the meat feast shelter and sent for two special friends to come and eat it with him there. He gave part of the liver and the intestines to the members of the feast, and the rest of the meat he sent to his home to be consumed by his family.

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The two half-saddle joints, the two hind legs, the two halves of the pelvic girdle, and the two forelegs were set aside for the members of the feast as whole, including the man who had provided the animal; together with these went the backbone, lungs, and heart, all of which were made into soup. The *subcutaneous fascia*, or tough meaty tissue below the ribs (*ngaĩ*) was given to the boys who were in attendance to collect firewood.

When one animal had been consumed, another was slaughtered, until each member of the feast had provided a beast. In addition to the meat, each member of the feast had gruel (*ũcũrũ*) brought to him daily from his home, and he also ate roast bananas and sugar-cane.

Soups

At a meat feast one of the most important things was the soup, to which various herbs were added to provide the "tonic" the men required. The plants used for making the tonic soup were selected from the following, according to what species were available in the vicinity: *mũirũngi*, *kererũa*, *mũkinyai*, *mũcũthĩ*, *mũhuha*, *mũkawa*, *mũtũra*, *mũkarakinga*, *mũhĩndahĩndĩ*, *mũgũra*, *mũteta*, *mwarĩki*, *mũtorothua*, *ndũrutua*, *mũũũ*, *mũkaragatĩ*, *mũgaita*, *njaani*, *thamatũ*, *mũthithĩi*, *ndũrirũ*, *thũcũnai*, *rima*, or *mũrangarĩ*. Only the roots of these plants were used. The bark of *mũthĩga*, *mũgumo*, and *mũkindũri* were also used, and occasionally the roots of *gĩthũũri*.

If the feast was for old men, they always consumed special honey beer, to which was added rendered down fat, blood, powdered *thamatũ* roots, and powdered *ngaita* berries. This mixture was regarded as an excellent tonic.

Some of the above mentioned roots and barks having been collected, they were boiled in a big cooking pot, and the juices from them added to the soup, together with fat, and the whole stirred to a froth with the *kĩbĩri* (a stirring stick or whisk). *Mũiri* bark, which was also used at the meat feasts, was, however, never put into the soup.

Division of Cattle Meat

Sometimes, instead of having a meat feast of goats and sheep as described, a number of men would join together to slaughter one or more oxen or barren cows. First they found someone who had an ox or a barren cow for sale, and this was bought for four to eight sheep or goats, according to its size. Each member of the proposed feast provided one (p.276) animal for the purchase. Animals for such a purchase were always either ewes, female goats, or young males, all being animals that had not yet borne young or become stud animals.

The ox, having been purchased, was driven down to the site chosen for the meat feast, slaughtered, and cut up in accordance with the custom described in Chapter 7.

The following joints had to be given to the elders of the village council other than those participating in the feast; the backbone (*ihĩndĩ*) with one kidney, both tendons of the *longissimus dorsi* muscles (*nga*) with both oblique abdominal muscles (*njũũgu*) attached, half the liver, the diaphragm, the ventral sac of the rumen (*ihu rĩa gĩkonyo*), and a portion of the intestines (*gĩtũngo kĩa mara*). The following were set aside and divide among the wives of the participants in the feast, or in the case of warriors, their mothers: the meat of both thighs (*cĩero*), but not the bone, three pieces of the intestines (*itũngo cia mara*), half the liver, the eight portions of the *mũtura* (colon and part of the rectum), the abomasum or fourth chamber of the stomach (*ngerima*), the dorsal sac of the rumen, or first chamber of the stomach (*ihu rĩa maĩ*), and the omasum or third chamber of the stomach (*gakuo kaingĩ* or *karaguma*).

The warriors of the village (other than any participating in the feast had to be given the neck and the anal end of the rectum (*gĩtungati*).

Those who acted as skinners got the *mũrote* (oblique external abdominal muscles), the *semitendinosus* muscle (*mũũthĩ*), and the second and third ribs of each side (*mbari cia thakame*), the upper end of the sternum (*kabuutu*), the pubic arch with part of the pubic bone on either side (*kahĩndĩ ka athĩnji*), and one kidney. The meat between the back leg (*itina ria kiugũ*) went to the owner of the cattle enclosure where the animal spent its last night. All the remaining joints (see Chapter 7 for omplete list) belonged to the people participating in the feast.

Of the meat given to the elders of the council, the lower end of the backbone, after the *rũga* (the tendons of the *longissimus dorsi* muscle) and the *njũũgũ* (the internal oblique abdominal muscle) had been severed from it, was given to one elder and cut up by a second. This cutting was called *gũthaca*, and he had to cut it into six parts, each called *kĩambo* (a vertebra with meat attached). Of these one was called *kĩambo kĩa ũiyũkio*, one *kĩambo kĩa mũthaci*, and the biggest one, *kĩambo kĩa thaco*. The other three had no special names. The man cutting up these joints got the *kĩambo kĩa mũthaci*, while the man who had been given the *ihĩndĩ* in the first place had the part called the *kĩambo kĩa ũiyũkio*. This had the kidney attached to it, and that was his too, as well as the fat attached to the kidney.

The council elders came and ate their meat at the place of the feast (p.277) but made a special fire of their own for roasting it. The women's meat was divided up and carried home. The same plants as mentioned for a goat or sheep feast were used in an ox feast for tonic purposes.

Taboos Connected with Meat Feasts

1. If the pot in which the meat was being cooked, or the small earthen pot in which the soup was being stirred (*bĩra*) should break, a ram or ewe had to be sacrificed at once, *ya kũhoria* ('to make it cold', that is, to restore peace and ward off evil influences—see glossary).

2. If, in the case of a goat or a sheep, the man who pulled out the lungs failed to bring out the heart at the same time, a ram or a ewe had to be sacrificed at once for purification.

3. If the eye of a goat or a ram burst when taking it out of the skull, a ram or a ewe had to be sacrificed for purification.

4. If the half-gourd (*kiuga*) in which the fat was put broke, a ram or a ewe had to be sacrificed for purification.

5. If the fire went out during a meat feast, a ram or a ewe had to be sacrificed "for lighting a new fire".

6. On the last day of a meat feast, the participants could not leave the cave or shelter by the entrance they had been using all the time, but each man had to break through the walls at a separate place and go out that way.

7. On the last day of the feast each man had to put a little bit of meat on small skewers and leave it to roast at the fire made of all the rubbish and stakes used for the roasting platforms.

8. No man participating in a meat feast could sleep anywhere except at the shelter built for the feast (see above for special Options).

9. No women or girls could enter the cave or shelter where a meat feast was taking place.

Blood (*Thakame*) *as Food*

Mũkũũi

Raw blood was consumed both when live animals were bled with a bleeding arrow and when an ox or a cow was slaughtered.

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Thakame ya Gũtũndĩra

Sausages were prepared with the blood of slaughtered sheep or goats.

Ikoya

The partially congealed blood that was removed from the lung and heart cavity during the process of cutting up an ox, goat, or ram, was called *ikoya*, and was sometimes consumed raw from the cupped palms of the hands. In the case of goats and sheep, it was also used for sausages

Ngĩbũtũ

Blood was sometimes prepared as follows. When a live animal was bled, a pot of water was put on the fire, and when the water was really hot, the blood was poured in and stirred with the *kĩbĩri* (stirring stick or whisk). Then mutton or ox fat, was added, or fresh milk. This mixture was consumed hot.

Ūũndĩ

In times of food shortage, blood was prepared as follows as food for women and children. An animal was bled and its blood put into a half-gourd and allowed to congeal until almost solid. Then a pot with a little water in it was put on the fire and heated. The congealed blood was put into this in a lump and stirred continuously until all the water had boiled away. The solid cooked blood was then taken out, broken up, and eaten as though it were meat.

Iria Rĩrathĩre

Fresh milk was sometimes mixed with freshly drawn blood, well shaken up in a little gourd, and drunk by warriors.

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Ūũkĩ wa Mĩtĩ

Blood mixed with honey beer, fat, and *ngaita* powder, made from the fruit of *Rapanea rhododendroides*, was used as a tonic drink called *ũũkĩ wa mĩtĩ* (literally, honey from trees).

Mairo

Fresh blood mixed with plain honey was consumed by pregnant women.

Milk (*Iria*)

Iria Imata

This was milk specially curdled by putting it into gourds that had been washed out with cow urine, dried, and then smoked with olive wood smoke.

Mwĩtha

Fresh milk was consumed directly after milking.

Mathũco

Sometimes a big gourd of milk was set to curdle, then stirred with a stick and the whey drawn off. The whey was called *mathũco*.

***Ngorono* (*Butterfat*)**

Having drawn off the whey as described above, the gourd was gently shaken on the knees and from time to time more whey forced off it, till (p.280) finally all the whey, together with broken up curd, had been poured off leaving only little bits of which had now turned to a kind of cream cheese. This cream cheese was put into a cooking pot and melted so as to purify it. The melted butterfat was poured off into a half-gourd. This butterfat was used, in ceremonies connected with the Ũkabi guild, and also for the preparation of snuff. Only rarely was it eaten.

Other Animal Foods

No Kikuyu ever ate fish in any form. Apart from doves, which boys were allowed to kill and eat, no Kikuyu except those who were hunters (*aguĩmi*, or *aathi*), ever ate the meat of any wild animal or bird.

However, while working, women often caught locusts and large grasshoppers and tied them with a little bit of string to their leather cloaks. They took these home at night as special titbits for the children. During locust invasions, locusts were caught and roasted or grilled for children in a piece of broken pot (*rũgĩo*). Normally, adults did not eat them, but if the locusts had destroyed most of the crops and family threatened, they were caught in quantities, boiled, and then sun-dried. Then, when required, they were dipped in hot water, had the wings, head, and legs taken off, and were fried in fat and eaten.

Small boys and girls often caught grasshoppers (*ndaahi*) and the insects called *gĩtono* and *kĩongo kĩimbu*. They put quantities of these on skewers, roasted them over a fire, and ate them. In the rainy season children caught quantities of flying termites (*nguya*), took off their wings and fried them in their own fat. Adults never ate these.

Customs connected with Food

The seasonal crops which each woman planted in her garden were her own property, for the food supply of her own children, herself, and her husband. To a certain extent, she could do what she liked with this food. For instance, if she wished to buy any household article such as a winnowing tray, a cooking pot, a basket, or a gourd, she could barter for with the food in her granaries without consulting her husband or anyone else. If, on the other hand, there was a big harvest and several granaries were filled from one woman's fields, the husband had full right to say to the woman, "Such-and-such a granary is not to be touched; we will keep (p.281) the food in that one to sell for sheep and goats". If a man had given his wife such an order, that order had to be obeyed. Even so, there was recognition that that food was her property, for the animals bought with it had to be allotted to her hut and could be used only in connection with the woman and her children, or for the marriage negotiations of her children.

The cereal called bulrush millet was an exception to this general rule, for all bulrush millet was regarded as the property of the husband of the woman in whose fields it was grown, and as we have seen, it was planted by his express orders. Bulrush millet was a crop of ritual and ceremonial significance, and gruel made of bulrush millet was required in many ceremonies in which beer was also brewed ritually. It could not, therefore, be used by a woman for ordinary household food without her husband's special permission, and this would not be given unless there was plenty of it.

No co-wife could use the food of another wife's grain bin in any circumstances, and if one wife was short, she had to go and buy elsewhere, and could not buy from her co-wife, nor would her co-wife give her any.

Feeding Arrangements

In a Kikuyu household all cooked vegetable foods prepared for meals were apportioned by the woman who cooked them. Every woman who had her own hut had special half-gourds set aside for each member of her household, and for her husband. When the food was cooked, the woman first dished out (*ihũra*) her husband's *rũĩga* (share) into his special half-gourd, and took it over to the men's hut, where each of his other wives, and his mother (if she was alive), also brought him his share of what they had cooked. From this food, supplied to him from all the women's huts, the man fed himself and any guests who had called in to see him.

Having taken her husband his share of the food she had cooked, the woman went back to her hut and dished out the rest of the food. The dish of every member of her household had a share put into it, even if they were not present at the time, for they might come in later and want it, or they might want to eat the food cold in the morning. No one might eat any other than his or her own, but each member of the household could share this portion with any guests of their own age or sex. Guests never had a special share dished out for them.

Usually, the children of one woman invited the children of a co-wife (p.282) to come and eat with them, sharing their food with them, whereas they all repaired to the other children's mother's hut where they received similar hospitality. Boys sometimes took their share over to the men's and ate it there, but girls ate only in their mother's hut or in the hut of co-wife of their mother.

A woman always cooked more food at night than was likely to be required for her family that evening and she put a big half-gourd food away to be eaten for breakfast (*kwĩgagũra*) next morning.

It was always the woman of the hut who apportioned the food she had cooked, and if she knew that a son or a daughter had guests, she gave him or her a bigger share, so that when it was shared with the guests her own child would not have to stint.

A woman usually went back to the men's hut after dishing out the food, and sat and talked to her husband and his guests (if he had any before she had her own food. She never ate in the men's hut, in the presence of her husband, or with her husband or any other married man unless it was for some special ceremonial purpose. Sometimes a woman took uncooked maize cobs and sweet potatoes to roast for her husband and his guests in the men's hut, but she never ate any of these with them.

A woman sometimes put a pot of food to cook in the men's hut if she had no room on her own hearthstones, or if her own fire had gone out. After she did this, she took the family's half-gourds, dished out the food there and then took it back to her hut.

When eating the evening meal, children sat round the fire on the side near the *kwerũ*, where the goats and sheep slept, and by their mother's bed. The initiated girls of the hut sat by the girls' sleeping place, unless there were young men guests (*aanake*), in which case these guests sat by the girls' sleeping place and the girls went and ate their food by the porch where they could not be seen, for they could not eat in the presence of the young men. The woman of the hut, too, if young men guests were present, did not eat until they had gone, but she could and did sit with her sons, and eat in their presence, for they were still her children, even though grown-up men.

If a grown-up unmarried son had a *thingira*, or men's hut of his own, his mother took his share of food to him and there he shared it with any guests who had called on him. If any girls were also guests of the young man, they went and ate outside the hut. If a woman had a married son who had built his own homestead behind her hut, she still put part of the food into a half-gourd for him, and took it to him, although his wife could also have cooked for him.

When boys went off in the morning to herd goats and sheep and went out with the cattle, their mothers gave them food for the day in a small (p.283) string bag, but often supplemented this by eating such things as locusts, ticks, and doves which they snared. Ticks, especially the big ones, full of cow's blood, were regarded by boys as a tasty morsel. They were roasted over a fire on a small spit and then eaten for the sake of the cow's blood they contained.

When warriors went to herd cattle they never took cooked food with them, but if they got hungry during the course of the day, they would send one of the boys helping them to cut some sugar-cane, or to get a bunch of green bananas to roast.

Women and girls going to work in the fields often took cooked food with them, or else a small cooking pot in which to boil some potatoes or beans to at midday.

Before a woman went out for the day, she always put some cold cooked food into a half-gourd in one of her granaries, so that if her husband wanted food at any time while she was out it was there ready for him.

Drink

Beer (*njohi*) was made principally from sugar-cane, but a good deal of beer was also made from honey, as honey beer was essential for many ceremonial purposes. An unfermented honey drink (*mũruru*) was also made.

In the preparation of both honey beer and sugar-cane beer, the Kikuyu used the fruits of the tree called *mũratina* (*Kigelia africana*). These fruits served as a kind of reserve of fermentation. The few such trees growing in South Kikuyu were all on private estates, and although wild, they were regarded as strictly private property. No one, other than a member of the family owning the estate, could go and collect the fruits of the tree. If a person wanted them, and had none on his own family land, he had either to buy them unprepared or buy them ready for use.

Mũratina fruits were never picked off the tree, but were considered ready for use only when they had fallen to the ground of their own accord. Having collected a number of these fruits, a man would prepare them for use or sale by cutting off both ends of the fruit, and then either boiling them whole or baking them in hot ashes. In either case they were cooked until quite soft. They were then split longitudinally into halves, and in case of a very big specimen, these halves were again divided. The sections were thoroughly washed so as to remove all the seeds, the outer rind was peeled off, and the sections were squeezed and put out to dry in the sun. When dry, every section was "seemed" at the ends by sewing with bark string, so as to prevent splitting and fraying.

p.284
When thus prepared, these sections were put into a big earthenware jar with sugar-cane pith (*ndumbũ*) from which juice had been extracted for beer, and after 24 hours the sections had been partially affected by the germs of fermentation, which abound in pith. When next a brew beer was being prepared, a few new sections of *mũratina* fruit were put on the ground and beer dregs from the old sections that had been used were squeezed out over them. This process was repeated on several brewing occasions before the new *mũratina* sections were ready for use in beer brewing.

Beer Making

When a man wished to brew beer for any purpose, he first went to sugar-cane field to cut the canes, or if he had none of his own he bought standing canes from someone else. A man would pay one goat or sheep for a patch (*gĩcigo*) of growing canes, which would make several brew beer. When he did so he was always given in addition a *gĩcigo gĩa gũkũra* (a patch for pulling, i.e. for pulling to eat raw), as an extra over and above the purchased patch. Unless this second patch was added, the buyer had the right to cut two successive crops from the first patch before relinquishing his rights.

The cutting of canes was men's work, and they first pulled the cane from the growing stool, then lopped off the top leaves, and partially removed the bark from each cane by slicing it quickly with their sword. The women then bound the canes in bundles and carried them up to the sugar-cane crushing mortar near the homestead.

The type of mortar most commonly used was a long log of *mũiri* wood with a series of holes cut into it to act as mortars. The pestles used were the ones used in the homestead for crushing corn. The log was called *mũgogo wa ndĩrĩ*. When the canes had been brought to the spot, the man made a special place upon which to cut them up. They laid a number of pieces of the green bark of banana trees (*ngoto*) on the ground side by side, and pegged down the ends. On this "table" the loads of cane were cut up into lengths of about l½-2in. called *mbera*. These were made into a pile, from which the women took handfuls and pounded them in the mortars with their pestles. The crushed pulp (*mũtu*), oozing with cane juice, was then placed in a big hole in the ground lined with oxhide and containing water. All the crushed pulp was put into the water, and then taken out and handed in half-gourds to the men who were to squeeze it (*ahihi*). These men took handfuls of the pulp (p.285) and bound with string made from the bark of *mũgio*, and squeezed the juice into another half-gourd.Then they poured the juice off into another half-gourd, very slowly so as to keep back any pulp that had fallen in. The dry pulp was thrown away and the juice poured back into the skin to mix with water and fresh cane pulp. Then more pulp was squeezed.

At last all the canes had been crushed and the last of the pulp taken from the skin basin. At this stage a man and a woman tasted the juice and water (*ngogoyo*). If it seemed to be of the right consistency and not too watery or strong, it was strained. A big bottle-necked gourd from which the base had been cut away was used as a funnel and placed over a big, open-mouthed, beer brewing gourd, called *ndua*. Then the body of the funnel was filled with bracken, and the juice poured through it. The bracken acted as a strainer to catch bits of pith and pulp. About 18 of the prepared sections of *Kigelia* fruit were put into each brewing vessel beforehand. When all the juice had been strained, these large *ndua* gourds were put to stand by a big fire in a woman's hut. This was called *kũhanda njohi*. If the juice with the *mũratina* sections in it was put to stand in the late afternoon, the beer was ready by the next morning, for the *mũratina* acted as a quick fermenting

agent, like yeast. Their slight bitterness also counteracted the excessive sweetness of the sugarcane and made it more pleasant to the taste.

The man having the beer brewed was not supposed to sleep that night in the hut in which the beer was brewing, or if he did so, he was not to have any social or sexual contact with his wife. Early the next morning he went to that hut, and called for a drinking horn (*rũhĩa*) and a woman's drinking gourd cup (*ndahi*). He filled the horn and the cup from one of the vessels, went to the fireplace, and poured out the hornful on the stones of the hearth, at the same time calling upon the spirit of his father to bless him, his family, and his beer party, and offering the beer to his deceased father, his deceased father's dead brothers (if any), and all his deceased male relatives. He also prayed to them, asking for wealth, good health, and blessing, and asking them to keep any evil from the home. Then he did the same with the woman's drinking cup, calling this time on his deceased mother, her co-wives (if dead), and his deceased female relatives, praying likewise to them.

Then he refilled the horn and the cup and went out to the entrance area of the homestead and again called on his deceased male relatives, prayed to them, and poured out a little of the beer from the horn. Then he did the same with the drinking cup and called on the deceased women. To his general prayers he added a special one at the entrance area, asking spirits to keep watch and prevent workers in witchcraft (p.286) (*arogi*) from coming to the beer drink. Then he went to the tree growing in the middle of the courtyard, where family sacrifices took place poured out the rest of the beer, first from the horn and then from the drinking cup, praying as before. If a man's father was not dead he could not perform these rites himself, and whenever he brewed beer his father had to come and perform them on his behalf. If a man's father was dead but his mother was alive it was she who acted as priest of the home and came to perform the offering and services of prayers. If neither a man's father nor his mother was dead but they were living at some distance and could not come to perform the ceremony, these special offerings and prayers were omitted. However, an offering was made later to dead relatives as a whole, when the beer was being poured from the large brewing gourd (*ndua*) into ordinary beer gourds, as described presently.

Having offered these prayers and completed the ritual as described at the hearth, the gate, and the altar of the home, the man went back to the hut where the beer had been brewed and for the third time filled the horn and the gourd cup. This time he took a drink from the horn and spat it out over his chest "to bless himself" (*kwĩrathima*), and then drank the rest of the hornful. Then he handed the gourd cup to his wife, who likewise "blessed herself" and drank the cupful.

Reasons for Beer Parties

No Kikuyu ever brewed beer just as a drink for himself. All beer was brewed for some definite ceremonial, ritual, or social purpose. For instance, a man who wished to show his respect for another would brew beer for him, and summon him to come and drink at the feast. Or a man who had a favour to ask another (for example if he wanted to board out—*hithia*—some cattle with him), would brew beer and ask the man to the feast. Or again, beer had to be brewed on a number of occasions in connection with the arrangement of a marriage, and in connection with initiation ceremonies and many other such ceremonial occasions, as we shall see later. Beer, too, was sometimes brewed in connection with special sacrifice (*igongona*), but for the moment we shall not consider the procedure in connection with sacrificial beer, but only for beer brewed for some other person in connection with a rite, ceremony, or social obligation. The important point is that whenever such beer was brewed it was brewed on behalf of one person, and the whole brew was the property of that person, who by custom had to dispose of it in accordance with strict rules.

p.287
Sometimes the person for whom the beer was brewed was invited to come and drink it at the homestead where it was brewed; on other occasions, as ordained by custom, the beer was taken to the homestead of the person for whom it was brewed. The customs varied according to the circumstances, and we will first consider the correct procedure when the man for whom it had been brewed came to the homestead of the brewer to drink it. Under this heading we must make several sub-divisions, for the customs varied to some extent according to the occasion.

Beer Drinks at the Brewer's Homestead

Njohi ya Thigari (*Beer for companionship*)

If a man was friendly with another, he might decide to brew beer to show his friendship and esteem, but he did not brew a great deal of beer for such an occasion. He brewed perhaps enough to fill three or four beer gourds (*inya*, singular *kĩnya*), and one or two small ones, but no more.

He then sent a message to his friend, "Come and see me tomorrow morning, as I want you to accompany me somewhere". ('*Ūndokere, ndĩna handũ ngwenda ũndware*'). The man who received this message did not know whether he was being invited to drink beer brewed especially for him or not, for this invitation could equally have meant that his friend wanted him to come and eat sacrificial meat, or even that someone else had brewed beer for his friend and he wanted to go accompanied by the other man (and one or two others), as recognised by custom. Having received the message, therefore, the man simply asked one, or at most two, of his own friends to accompany him next morning to the home of the man who had summoned him, and when the little party arrived there, the who man who had brewed the beer said, "I sent for you because I have brewed a little beer for you".

Before the arrival of the invited guest, the beer brewer performed the ceremony of *gũkerũra njohi* (pouring off the beer from brewing vessels, *ndua*, into smaller gourds). For this he sent for one or two friends from his own village, and one of these was selected as the *mũkerũri* ('the one who pours off'). This man sat down on a stool and was first told to taste the beer and see if it was ready. (This was only a matter of form, as the owner had already tasted it). He took a hornful, "blessed himself" with the first mouthful, and then drank it and pronounced that it was all right. He then called for "wax" to make a lip on the vessel so that he could pour the beer off. The vessel (*ndua*) was put into his lap and he moulded the wax (p.288) into a lip on the rim of the ground. Then he poured beer into a big drinking horn (this hornful of beer was called *mahuti*), and sent it either to a new relative of the man who had brewed the beer or to a member of his age group. This *mahuti* having been sent off, the rest of the beer was poured into beer gourds called *inya* or *nyaŋja* (according to size), and it probably filled two of them. When the last drop had been poured, the pourer took up the last gourd filled, and drank a small drop directly from it. This was "to ward off evil" (*kwĩũmbũra*), and was an essential part of the proceedings; if he forgot to do so, the next child he begot would be an idiot. Then he removed the wax lip from the empty vessel, which was now taken from his knees, and a second one was put in its place. He remoulded the wax lip and fitted it to this second vessel, and again the hornful called *mahuti* was poured off and sent to some male relative or member of age-group of the beer brewer.

This second large vessel was also poured off into smaller gourds including some into a bottle gourd (*gĩtete*), and he again drank from last gourd filled before he took the wax lip off the big vessel. Then man who had been pouring (*mũkerũri*), the man who helped lift large vessel on to his lap,

and the owner of the homestead (*mwene mũciĩ*) each drank two hornfuls from the last gourd filled, and each of the women present in the hut drank one hornful.

The brewer then instructed his wife to put the bottle gourd (*gĩtete*), one big and one small *kĩnya* away in her bedroom, and he went out to await his guest in the men's hut.

Outside in the courtyard he probably found a number of men assembled. These were men who had seen the beer being prepared on previous day and who knew, therefore, that beer would be available. To these he said, "My guest has not yet come; if you don't wish to wait go away, for beer has been brewed for so-and-so and he is not yet here.

When the guest arrived he went to the men's hut (or, if he had arrived while the ceremony of *gũkerũra* was in process, he was there already with the one or two friends whom he had brought with him). The brewer of the beer took him over to the hut where the beer was, and said, "I brewed this beer for you, here it is". The friend, by etiquette, had to reply, "This beer really is not enough. Is this all you have invited me to?" Then the big hidden gourdful was brought out and added, making perhaps four gourdfuls, and the guest said, "That's better. Now I am going to give two of these back to you because I see a lot of people from your village have assembled". This reply, like the first, was demanded by custom and was never omitted. The brewer of the beer then sent off the two gourdfuls that had been given back to him. One was for the elders of the council who were present, and was called *mũrora*. The other (p.289) was sent to the men who had helped to prepare the juice on the previous day, the *ahihi*, who had also assembled. The guest, his two or three special friends whom he had brought with him, and the host with two or three of his friends, now took the remaining two gourdfuls and sat apart to drink it by themselves, while the council elders and those who had helped prepare the beer also sat in separate groups. After the host, his guest, and their small party had each draunk three hornfuls, the guest of honour singled out various people whom he knew among the council elders, and sent them each a hornful as a mark of respect. When all the beer that was presented to him was finished, the guest departed, as did the members of the council and those who had helped prepare the beer. Then the brewer of the beer called for the small gourdful of beer that was put away in the woman's bedroom, and divided this among his wives and any special friends from his own village.

Njohi ya Kĩrugo (*A Beer Feast*)

When a man had been friendly with another for a long time, or had become relation-in-law, he might decide to brew him beer in quantity; this was called *njohi ya kĩrugo* (beer for a feast). When he brewed beer for this purpose, the messengers whom he sent to summon his friend to the beer drink were told to say that beer had been brewed, so that the friend might know in advance why he had been sent for and could bring eight or ten of his own friends from his village with him. Beer brewed for a *kĩrugo* was brewed in great quantity, enough for at least ten gourdfuls. In the morning, after the ceremony of offerings to the spirits, the brewer of the beer called in two friends and they poured off (*kerũra*) the beer as already described, except for the last large brewing vessel (*ndua*), which could not be poured off until the guest and his party had come.

As soon as the guest arrived with his eight or ten friends, he sent all but two of them to the men's hut, but he went straight to the hut of the chief wife, because he knew the beer was for him and that he was awaited. He took two of his friends with him. Before the special guest and his friends tasted any beer at all, in fact as soon as they entered the woman's hut, they were given a dishful of cooked *njahĩ* beans to eat as a token of welcome.

In the hut the gourds that had already been filled had been hidden, except for the last one, which was waiting to be poured off into the empty gourds. The guest was ceremonially given a hornful drawn from this vessel, and he tasted it, blessed himself with it, and was asked if it (p.290) was all right. He said, "Yes, pour it off". The man who had been doing this all along now poured off the beer from this last *ndua*, pouring first the *mahuti*, which was sent to the man who had already had the *mahuti* of each of the other brewing vessels. Before this first hornful from each gourd was sent to its recipient, the brewer sipped a little to show it was not poisoned, and blessed himself with it. Then the man who was pouring off the beer poured off all the rest into the waiting gourds and performed the *kwĩũmbũra* ceremony (the first drink to ward off evil).

The brewer of the beer then said to his guest, "I invited you to come and drink beer, here it is", and pointed to the gourds that had just been filled. The guest, according to custom, laughed and said, "If that is all the beer you have for me, I won't drink any, I'll go away". Then the host told his wife to bring out more beer, having previously warned her to keep back at least three gourdfuls.

The guest at this stage sent for three or four more of his friends who were waiting in the men's hut, and when they came he said, "Give us a gourdful", and from this he directed that two hornfuls be given to each of his friends, one each to his host and those who had poured off the beer and one gourd cup to each of the women in the hut. This beer having been consumed, he said to his host, "Now we'll divide the beer, and I'll give some back to you so that you can do your duty to the council elders and those who helped prepare it (the *ahihi*), who are outside". If there was an even number of gourds, he kept half the number for himself, but in every case taking the larger sized gourds so that he had more than half the quantity of beer. If there was an odd number of gourds, he took the extra one as well as half the rest, giving back to the host only enough for his proper duties.

Then the guest and his friends divided into groups and each group took a gourdful and went out to the men's hut to drink their beer there. Each such group summoned one or two others from the uninvited guests, who were waiting outside, to come and join them. The owner then sent out the beer for the council elders, another gourd for those who had helped in its preparation, and a small gourd for any relatives-in-law (other than his guest of the day), who might have put in an appearance.

The guest and his friends who had gone to the men's hut with their beer waited there for the host. They could not unstopper the gourds and start drinking until their host joined them. When he arrived he asked for *njohi ya gũkunũra inya* (beer to unstopper the gourds), and they unstoppered the first of their gourds and poured him a hornful, which he did not drink, but poured out at the foot of one of the roof supports of the hut, for the ancestral spirits. He was then given a second hornful, which he drank.

p.291
When the host had drunk the *njohi ya gũkunũra inya* with his guests in the men's hut, he went out and drank a hornful or two with the council elders and a hornful or two with the helpers.

After this the host either stayed in the men's hut so as to have the first hornful from each gourd, or sent in a friend to act as his deputy, for usually he was loath to drink much at this stage, as it was incumbent upon him as host not to get drunk yet. The chief guest similarly had to avoid getting drunk, and he also warned one or two of his special friends not to get drunk either. Then when all the main beer drinking was over, the casual guests departed, and the chief guest and host, each

with two or three friends, repaired to the hut where the beer had been brewed, to drink the gourd of beer called *njohi ya kũruta indo* (literally, for taking things out).

Njohi ya Bata (*Beer for Important Business*)

When a man had any reason to discuss business with another, such as the boarding out (*hithia*) or collecting back (*hithũria*) of cattle, the dunning for repayment of a loan, etc. it was incumbent upon him to invite the person concerned to come and drink beer, and then he told the man, "I've brewed beer for you because I want . . ." and informed his guest of the business at hand. After the business had been discussed and settled, the beer was given to the guest, who returned a part of it in accordance with the customs already described under *njohi ya thigari*.

In addition to the above three categories, there were many occasions for special beer brewing—in connection with betrothal and marriage, initiation, etc.—but in general the rules of procedure in connection with these beer feasts were similar to those already described. Where they differed in important points the differences will be indicated in discussing the particular ceremony concerned.

Njohi ya Gũtega (*Beer taken to a Friend's Homestead*)

Sometimes a man brewed beer for another man but took it to his friend's homestead instead of inviting him to come drink it at the homestead where it was brewed. This was called *njohi ya gũtega*, and we must consider the procedure followed in the several major variations connected with it.

p.292
Njohi ya Ūrata (*Beer as a Token of Friendship or Esteem*)

A man sometimes took beer that he had brewed to the homestead of a friend simply as a token of esteem. In such a case he sent a message saying that he was coming to call on such-and-such a day if it was convenient. If the messenger returned saying that it would be convenient for him to call, the man then prepared the beer in readiness the preceding day, and on the morning after it was brewed made the appropriate offerings to the ancestral spirits, and called in two friends to help him pour the beer from the big brewing gourds into the smaller gourds.

The pouring procedure was identical to that followed if the beer to be consumed in the homestead: the sipping of beer by the *mũkerũri* (the man who poured it off), then the pouring of the *mahuti* (the hornful), the filling of the beer gourds, the ceremony of *kwĩũmbũra* (warding off evil), and so on for each gourdful. Then the brewer of the beer had to allot a gourdful for the council elders who had come to the homestead knowing beer had been brewed there the day before. He also to provide beer for those who had helped with the preparation of the beer, and for the women. This done, he sent women off with the five, or more gourdfuls that were to go to his friend's home, and he followed later with three or four friends, after first seeing that the council elders and others were satisfactorily provided for. On arriving at the home of the man for whom he had brewed beer, he went with his friends to the men's hut, while the women who had carried the beer took it to the chief wife's hut, where they were given food to eat. The men gave the women time to eat the food prepared for them, and then the owner of the homestead invited the man who had brought the beer over to the hut with him. Here the owner of the homestead drank a hornful and filled it up again and gave it to the man who had brought it after which the owner of the homestead accepted the beer and gave a gourdful back to the brewer and the friends who accompanied him the remaining gourds he had to send one out for the council elders who would come from the surrounding

homesteads, and a second for the special friends of his, other than the man who had brought it. The gourd which the two of them had drunk from first he kept for himself and the womenfolk.

Njohi ya Gũthemba (*Beer as a Circumcision Present*)

If a man had had a son or daughter initiated, any relation-in-law, brother, or member of the same age-group had to take a gift of beer with a (p.293) friend either at the time of the initiation ceremony (in which case two gourdfuls were required), or at some later date. If he did so at a later date, however, he had to take four gourdfuls instead of two, and also two bunches of bananas, some bulrush millet gruel, yams, and maize. In some districts a ram also had to be taken as a present, but this was not done everywhere. When a man had prepared beer for this purpose, he sent a message in advance saying he was coming to *themba* (to bring circumcision present) on such-and-such a day, and the man to whom he was taking it (*thembera*) also brewed beer in preparation for that day. Of the beer taken over, one gourdful was returned to the brewer, and of the beer brewed there in readiness for his coming he was given two or three gourdfuls. Apart from this, the customs were similar to those as for beer taken as a token of friendship (*njohi ya ũrata*), and before going off with the beer, the brewer had to give out beer for the council elders and helpers, etc. in the same way.

Njohi ya Rũra (*Beer for Refreshment or Hospitality*)

When a man had brewed beer to take elsewhere, he always brewed more than he needed to take with him, and before he started off with it he selected one or two special friends among the council elders who had come to drink their usual share (*mũrora*), and gave them a whole gourdful each saying, "*Ka, nĩndakũgwata rũra*." ('I offer you hospitality').

Beer Drinking Etiquette

When beer had been brewed for any purpose at any homestead, the fact was common knowledge because the preparation took place in the open, as we have seen, and a number of people came to help in the work of squeezing the pulp. Any member of the council who was of an age to be eligible to drink beer had the right to come next day to share in the councillors' gourdful of beer (the *mũrora*). If much beer had been brewed the *mũrora* was increased to two gourds.

Eligibility for beer drinking depended upon age and status, and no man who had not had a child of his own initiated was entitled to drink beer, other than just a sip for ceremonial purposes. The only exception to this was in the case of a man who happened to have lost a number of children in early life, who, if they had lived, would by then have reached initiable age.

p.294
It was quite contrary to law and custom for any unmarried man and young married man to drink beer and get drunk, and, in fact the general position was that until a man had a warrior son to fight and protect the family he himself was responsible for his family's safety and so might never get drunk.

When a man had beer brewed in his homestead he borrowed drinking horns, and drinking gourd cups (for the women), from all his neighbours if he did not have enough of his own, but it was not regarded necessary to have a drinking horn for each person. The sharing of gourd cups drinking horns was a recognised custom.

At a beer drink, one of the group was selected as the pourer (*mũkerũri*) and he poured out a hornful for the chief guest, who was sitting to the right. This the guest drank, and then had a second. Next

he ordered hornfuls to be poured for the man on the left of the pourer, after the pourer himself had drank two, and then each of the others, in turn, had two. When all the group had drunk two hornfuls, the chief guest said, "*Njohi nĩĩrogorũo*" ('Let another round of drinks start from the other end.'), and they each had a hornful, starting from the end of the line farthest from the chief guest.

This done, and when each had thus had three hornfuls, they would sometimes call some of their friends among the council elders (and uninvited guests), and the chief guest told the pourer to fill the horns and they were each in turn given one hornful. Then the chief guest was given his fourth hornful, and, having received it, he singled out one of the uninvited guests and gave it to him to drink. Similarly, each of the companions of the chief guest gave the fourth horn to an uninvited guest, so that all these had two hornfuls each. After this, the rest of the beer was consumed by the chief guest himself, and his companions and they gave no more of it away.

The council elders who had been given the *mũrora* gourdful (beer to casual guests) had one hornful of it each in rotation all round, and if there was enough left they had a second. None of them ranked above the "owner" of the beer, but it belonged to all alike and had to be shared equally until it was finished. When they had finished the *mũrora*, the uninvited council elders hung round in the hope of being called in by the chief guest to drink some of his beer as just described, but he was under no obligation to give them any and only gave some to them if he wished to do so.

When beer was being drunk in a homestead, the various groups drinking it were expected to deport themselves in a recognised way. The chief guest and his party drank either in the men's hut or just outside (p.295) to the right of the entrance as one goes in, by the nearest granary. The council elders sat by the granaries nearest to the homestead entrance (*thome*) on the men's hut side. Those who had helped prepare the beer sat between the men's hut and the senior wife's hut, and the women sat on the left side of the courtyard as you go in, that is, to the left of the senior woman's hut.

Honey

Honey Beer or Mead

Honey beer was not brewed for ordinary beer drinking, but only for special occasions such as ceremonies connected with initiation, marriage, or religious purposes. No man ever brewed more than one large brewing gourdful (*ndua*) at a time, i.e. enough for about three or four ordinary gourdfuls.

Honey beer was brewed as follows. Cold water was put into a big half-gourd, and into this honeycomb honey was squeezed and broken up. Then the crushed comb (*makahi*) was removed, the mixture was tasted, and if not strong enough more honey was added until the right consistency was achieved. The crushed comb was thrown away and the honey water was put into a big brewing vessel (*ndua*), into which about ten sections of *mũratina* (the fruit of *Kigelia africana*) had been placed. It was then left to stand till the *mũratina* caused it to ferment, which took about eight hours. Before it was poured off into the beer gourds on the following morning, a little was offered to the ancestral spirits in exactly the same way as described for sugar-cane beer, and when it was poured off, the same ceremonies *kwĩũmbũra* warding off evil, etc. took place. With honey beer, however, no *mũrora* beer was given to the council elders. It was all kept for the particular ceremonial purpose for which it been brewed.

Unfermented Honeymead (*Mũruru*)

Sometimes honey was mixed with water and drunk unfermented. It was called *mũruru*, and this drink was especially made for young women in connection with certain stages of marriage negotiation.

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Mũkondigũ

Plain honey that had drained off from the comb and stayed at the bottom of a honey barrel was called *mũkondigũ*. It was sometimes used for brewing honey beer but more often was eaten plain, or mixed with a little honey and drunk as a thick syrup.

Taboos Connected with Food and Drink

1. If a cooking pot cracked while food was being cooked that food could not be eaten by the family, but had to be given away.

2. If a woman broke a pot while she was making food in it that food had to be given away.

3. If a woman was cooking food for a ceremony or sacrifice and the pot broke while she was doing so, then a ram had to be slaughtered for purification.

4. If a woman's bead accidentally fell into the food that was being cooked and was fished out, that food had to be given away and not eaten by the family.

5. If a woman's bead fell into the food when it was being cooked and was not noticed until the food was being eaten, when someone found it in his or her mouth, a sheep had to be sacrificed at once for a purification ceremony.

6. No woman, except those past childbearing, could eat in presence of her husband except in connection with special ceremonies.

7. No woman or initiated girl, except a woman past childbearing, could eat in the presence of men other than some brothers.

8. No flesh of wild animal, bird, or fish might be eaten, except doves, which could be eaten by boys. (This taboo did not apply to the hunting clan).

9. No bulrush millet of a new season's crop could be eaten before a sacrifice had been made to purify it.

10. If the fire went out while any food other than edible arum (*ndũma*) was cooking, that food had to be given away and not eaten by the family.

11. If a lizard or frog fell into the fire while food was cooking (p.297) that food could not be eaten by the family, and had to be given to old women past childbearing.

12. If, while sweet potatoes were being cooked, the water boiled over, the potatoes might not be eaten by the family, but had to be given away.

13. Food to be cooked that was thrust into the fire through the gap between any two hearthstones and removed through a different gap was called *kĩrutĩro*, and could not be eaten by female children.

14. No one could in any circumstances step over a hearth in a hut.

15. No sexual intercourse might take place in a hut while there was a pot of food cooking on the fire. Should this be done, the food could not be eaten, for it had been defiled.

16 No sexual intercourse might take place in a hut where beer was brewing.

17. If a woman getting food from a granary should have accidentally let any menstrual blood touch the granary, all the food in that granary had to be given away; none might be eaten by any of the family.

18. No menstruating woman or girl could *kia ũcũrũ*, that is, make gruel by pounding corn and using the grindstones.

19. No menstruating woman could milk a cow or goat.

20. If a woman was menstruating when she was given beer to drink in connection with the offering and prayers to the ancestors, it had to be poured from the gourd cup (*ndahi*) into a half-gourd (*kiuga*) for her to drink. She might not drink from a *ndahi* while in this condition.

21. No menstruating woman might handle a *mũratina*, the fruit of the *Kigelia africana*.

22. No menstruating woman might handle sugar-cane, or crushed sugar-cane, while preparing it for beer, but she could do the actual pounding if another woman filled and emptied her mortar for her.

23. If beer was taken to another village as a gift (*gũtega*) in a small *ndua* (brewing vessel), as sometimes occurred, and it was later found that a *mũratina* had accidentally been left in the *ndua*, a sheep had to be slaughtered for purification.

24. If a sheep licked the canes from which beer was being prepared, or sipped some of the cane juice from the oxhide basin, that beer had to be thrown away or given away.

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25. If a child should trip and fall into the sugar-cane juice in the oxhide basin where beer was being prepared, a sheep had to be sacrificed and all the beer given away.

26. If any part of a woman's leather garment got into beer, a sheep had to be sacrificed for purification. (The commonest way for this to happen was for a small child to put a piece of an old garment in it while trying to imitate his or her elders' actions putting the *mĩratina* into a *ndua*).

27. If any child unstoppered a gourd of beer that had been stoppered in readiness for carrying elsewhere, that gourdful coould not be used to take to another village as a present.

28. If a relation-in-law was at a beer drink and vomited in the courtyard of his relations-in-law, a sheep had to be slaughtered.

29. If a man at a beer drink was so drunk that he defecated in the courtyard, a sheep had to be slaughtered at once for purification.

30. If men at a beer drink fought and blood was drawn, a sheep had to be sacrificed for purification.

31. If a woman was struck while carrying beer and the beer gourd broke in consequence, a sheep had to be slaughtered for purification.

32. If a man who was squeezing out juice from sugar-cane struck another man or woman with his bound up roll of sugar-cane pulp (*ikahĩ*), a ram had to be sacrificed in purification. But eventually the person struck would probably die.

33. If in anger a man broke a gourd containing beer, a sheep had to be sacrificed for purification.

Tobacco

The only narcotic used by the Kikuyu was tobacco, which they grew themselves. The cured tobacco was almost exclusively made into snuff but a few Kikuyu, especially of the Ũkabi guild, used to chew it.

Tobacco leaves were cured in the following manner. The leaves were not picked until they had started to turn yellow, when they were regarded as ripe. The ripe leaves were collected and tied up in bundles round which were tied leaves of either *mũcatha* or *mũkandu*, and the bundles were left to mature for a week or so. The bundles were then undone and the leaves cut up (*gũkera*) and pounded in the wooden mortar until thoroughly crushed. The crushed leaves were put into the broken (p.299) half of a pot (*rũgĩo*), covered over with *mũgoiya* leaves, and left for the night. Next day the crushed leaves were put out in the sun to dry on an oxhide taken from the men's hut, but when only partially dry they were tied up in big bundles in dry banana bark (*magoto*). These bundles (*rũtũndũ*) were then placed on the platform over the fireplace (*rũtara*) in the men's hut to go on drying and maturing in the dark. After several months the tobacco was considered ready to use for snuff taking.

Tobacco Chewing

A few men chewed dry tobacco leaf instead of taking snuff. For this purpose the tobacco was kept in a "box" slung round the neck like a snuff box, and little bits of soda were kept with it. When a man wanted to chew tobacco he put a little lump of soda between the cheek and the molar teeth of the lower jaw on one side, so as to get a slight soda flavour chewing the tobacco.

Smoking

The use of tobacco for smoking was quite unknown among the Kikuyu.

Snuff Making

As required, a certain quantity of dry, matured tobacco was put into a broken piece of cooking pot (*rũgĩo*) which had been previously heated over a fire. In this the leaf was toasted brown and made very dry and brittle. Then it was taken off the fire, and when the potsherd had cooled the tobacco was ground to a fine powder in it with the knob end of a club or knobkerrie (*njũgũma*).

When grinding tobacco, a man took care not to touch it with his hand, but moved the leaves to the centre of the pot with a little piece of hard leather (*gathuma*). When the entire leaf was crushed to a fine powder, and before it was taken from the potsherd, a little soda was mixed up with it, after which a little sheep's fat or butterfat was added to make the snuff slightly damp and not too dusty.

p.300
If no Magadi soda was available, one of the two following ingredients was used in small quantity—either ash from deep down in the (*kĩenja-riiko*), or ash made from burning the stump of a banana (*kĩenja*).

Snuff, having been made in quantity, was stored in special container called *kĩnya kĩa nyũmba* (gourds belonging to the hut). Prepared snuff was never sold in the days we are discussing, nor was it ever bartered. If a man had no tobacco of his own and wanted to make snuff, he bought a package of tobacco leaf wrapped in banana bark, which cost a goat skin.

Snuff Taking

Snuff was used principally by the older married men, all of who had snuff boxes which they wore attached to a chain round their neck (for details about snuff boxes and these chains, see Chapter 9). The women also took snuff, which they kept in little leather bags (*kĩĩng'ondu*). In these they kept a little snuff, together with little bits of sheep skin with the hair on. The latter they used as "brushes" to dip into the snuff, they then snuffed from the brush. Women never took quantities of snuff like men. Young unmarried men sometimes took snuff, but if need be, they usually kept their snuff tied in a little piece of banana bark attached to the corner of their cloaks.

Old men were the principal snuff users, and they took it by pouring little snuff into the palm of the left hand, and pinching it between the tips of the thumb and first finger of the right hand, applying it nostrils, and snuffing it up. Alternatively, it was scooped on to the top of the thumbnail and put to the nose that way. Every man kept a brush (*mbuthi*) in his snuffbox. This was made from hyrax fur, and was dipped into the snuff and applied to the nose. It was especially used at night time, when a man woke up in the middle of the night and wanted just a whiff of snuff, but not a big pinch of it.

Snuff was also sometimes put into the cavity of a tooth to stop toothache.

Etiquette

By Kikuyu custom, when a man met a friend, or even a man he did not know at all, after greeting him he asked for a pinch of snuff by saying (p.301) "*Ta'he mbakĩ*" ('Would you give some snuff'). By etiquette, if the person asked had any snuff he could not refuse the request.

Taboos

There was only one taboo connected with tobacco, and that was against tending tobacco plants after having eaten beef.

Castor Oil

Although castor oil was not used as a food, drink, or narcotic, it is convenient to consider its preparation in this chapter.

When castor oil was to be prepared, the beans were first heated in a hot potsherd until they began to crackle. They were then turned out on to a rawhide mat and pounded with a special short pestle until they were all crushed and pulpy and could be moulded into a kind of dough. A special cooking pot that was never used for cooking anything else was then put on the fire and partly filled with water. When this water came to the boil the "dough" was broken up and dropped into it, being stirred all the time with an ox rib spoon. It was important to stir and watch this constantly, for it was a serious matter if the water boiled away. After boiling for some time, all the oil came to the surface, and the pot was taken off the fire and stood on the upturned legs of a stool. The oil was carefully poured off the top of the water into a half-gourd, after which more cold water was added to the pot, and the mush at the bottom stirred up. This caused more oil to come to the surface of the water, but this second batch was a thicker and and less pure oil (*manjaguca*). It was skimmed off with hands and used straight away on leather garments and on the body. It was never kept. The first pure batch was stored in special gourds (*inandũ*) and kept for use as required. The water and the mush at the bottom of the pot had to be thrown out beyond the entrance of the homestead.

Besides being used to rub on the body and to mix with red ochre, castor oil was used for various ceremonial "anointings" which will be dealt with in later chapters.

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Taboos connected with Castor Oil

1. It was taboo for the pot in which castor oil was being produced to be allowed to boil dry. If this happened a sheep had to be sacrificed for purification.

2. It was taboo to allow the castor oil pot to boil over, and that too, necessitated the sacrifice of a sheep for purification.

3. Sheep and goats might not, on any account, drink the mush at the bottom of the castor oil cooking pot. If one did, it had to be slaughtered.

4. If the pot in which castor oil was being prepared for ceremonial purposes were to break, a sheep had to be sacrificed for purification.

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Introduction

Among the Kikuyu certain items were crafted by specialists, who were usually confined to particular families, but not to special clans. On the other hand, many other crafts, such as basket making, hurdle-work, and much (but not all) woodwork, were practised by nearly everyone, or by such a large proportion of the populace that they could not be regarded as professions. Although the list of objects of material culture made and used by the Kikuyu which is given in this chapter is not complete, it is at least comprehensive enough to show something of the variety achieved. The principal materials used by the Kikuyu were iron, copper, brass, wood, bark, vegetable products, leather, clay, gourds, beads, shells, feathers, hair, horn, ivory, bone, and stone.

Traps are not mentioned in this chapter as they are fully described in Chapter 12.

The Blacksmith and his Ironwork

Among the Kikuyu a man who was a blacksmith was usually also a smelter, and there was no separate guild of smelters as there was in some tribes. On the whole, too, the smith's profession was a family affair and a man's sons would learn the craft from him. There was, however, no law or custom to prevent any man who so wished from apprenticing himself to a smith, and in the course of time becoming a smith himself. This, however, he could do only if he paid the necessary fees to his teacher, which were recognised as 30 ordinary goats and sheep and 10 stall-fattened animals.

The Blacksmith's Apprentices

Men who were smiths and smelters were called *aturi* (singular *mũturi*), and their apprentices were called *ahuruti* (bellows workers), since in earlier stages of their apprenticeship they were put in charge of the (p.304) bellows. Even the son of the smith had to pay fees to his father if he wished to enter the profession, but the fees paid by a son for his apprenticeship were not so high as those paid by an outsider. Any apprentice to a smith and smelter had ample opportunity to acquire the necessary stock with which eventually to pay the fees to his master, since he was entitled to a portion of the yield from each smelting, as we shall see.

Smelting

The raw material from which iron was smelted in South Kikuyu was the iron ore commonly called murram. This murram (*mũthanga*) was mined by the apprentices of the smith and smelter. Each apprentice (a smith nearly always had a number of them) would go out and mine the ore in big blocks. In mining they used small rough crowbars (*mĩũndwa*), and also digging sticks like those used in cultivation (*mĩnyago*). The small crowbars were used to crack the ore and then the wooden digging sticks were driven into the cracks and levered to break off a big lump of ore. Once mined like this from open quarries, the lumps of ore were broken up with a big hand hammer (*kĩriha kĩa*

ngundi). Having broken up the ore the apprentices sorted their material (*kũhũnga*), discarding all but the pieces which were visibly rich in iron. This rich ore was then hammered into a fine powder, wrapped in dry banana bark, and made into little bundles ready for smelting. Such a bundle was called *gatũndũ ka mũthanga*. Iron ore at this stage was referred to as *mathaga* (articles of personal adornment), as it was considered unlucky to speak of it as iron or as ore. Each apprentice prepared his own supply of ore for smelting and each one received back from the smith a proportion of the pig-iron obtained from his lot of ore. This pig-iron was in ingots (*ikama*), and the apprentice could either sell these as they were, or get the smith to make into swords and spears and sell those instead.

The furnace in which ore was smelted was called *nyũngũ* (a cooking pot), and to construct it, a hole was dug in the ground about 18in. deep and 2ft long. This was lined with potters' clay at the bottom and up to the sides. The clay of either side was brought up and moulded over into the bevelled edge, while the two ends of the hole were finished off at a lower level. (There is an excellent picture of an old, disused smelting furnace by Routledge, 1910, plate 54).

The general form of the furnace was arranged so as to be suggestive of the female genitalia. At either end of the hearth where the walls were, (p.305) and at lower level, there was fixed a long clay nozzle of the bellows. Such a nozzle (*ngerũa*) was usually made about 1ft long, and it tapered a little towards the point where the edge was moulded, so that there was a distinct suggestion of a human penis. Each of the two nozzles was pegged down while in use so as to keep it firm and the correct angle, in order that the blast from the bellows would go into the base of the furnace. To each nozzle there was fixed a pair of bellows (*miura*, singular *muura*), and each of the bellows was made from a piece of a well brayed goatskin cut into a rough triangle, which had a base about 18in. and sides of about 3ft. This triangle was folded and sewn along one side so as to form a cone, into the apex of which was fitted a carved hollow wooden nozzle. To quote Routledge's which I cannot better:

> The circumference of the brim of the leather fool's-cap, that constitutes the body of the bellows, is roughly divided into three parts. To two of these, on its outside, a straight flat strip of wood is sewn. An adjustable thong is stretched between the two extremities of each of each stick to form a bracket. (p.85).

The wooden nozzles of the two bellows at either end were put into the wide mouth of the clay nozzle at that end. The blast from both the bellows at one end of the furnace passed, therefore, through a single nozzle, and by working them in turn the apprentice in charge could keep up a constant flow of air to the furnance. The pair of bellows at the other end of the furnance was used in the same way:

> Slipping all the fingers of one hand into one loop, and the thumb of the same hand into the other, the lad who works the bellows brings together the butts of the two sticks, and rests them upright on the ground. (p.85).

He did the same with the bellows in his other hand. Then with each hand alternatively:

> . . . he next proceeds to separate his thumb from the fingers and palm, which results in the upper extremity of the sticks becoming separated; in other words, the circular opening of the bag is constrained to assume the form of a V, and through this V-shaped opening the air enters the bellows. Still keeping the sticks vertical, he now brings them together by closing his hand. That done, he depresses them on to the upper surface of the bag in the line of its long axis. . . (p.85)

This forced the air of that cone of leather into the furnace. As one bellows was emptied of air, the bellows worker was at the same time bringing the other one upwards to be refilled with air, and so on.

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In filling the furnace ready for smelting, the smith first put in a layer of charcoal, then two layers of ore wrapped in banana bark, and finally a second layer of charcoal which was piled up to the top of the "lips" of the furnace.

The charcoal was made from *mũthaiti*, *mũthĩga*, *mwathathia*, or *mũhũtĩ* wood. In the case of the first fire lit for smelting purposes in a new furnace, it was made with fire sticks and accompanied by the sacrifice of a goat, which was roasted in the furnace hearth.

When the smith and smelter had got everything ready and had lit the fire, two apprentices were called in to use the bellows. One of these was always the owner of the ore being smelted, and the other the man whose ore was to be smelted next day. They worked the bellows under the direction of the smith, who added charcoal from time to time, and told them to work faster or slower according to what he considered necessary. After a time, if he thought the ore had been sufficiently smelted, he told them to ease up and work more slowly. This was to let the ore cool a little, so that he could extract it in a red-hot, but not white-hot, condition. To extract it he used his tongs (*mĩĩhato*), first pulling out the lump derived from the upper layer of ore and putting it on his stone anvil (*ihiga*), then beating it with his big hammer (*kĩriha kĩa ngundi*) and cutting it into two. Next he pulled out the lower piece and did likewise.

The furnace was relaid and the smelting proceeded until all the supply of one apprentice's ore had been smelted. Work was then stopped for the day, as the ore provided by two different men could not be smelted on the the same day.

The "pigs" of iron were cooled in water and the smith took the bigger share, giving the apprentice one third of the total iron produced.

Sometimes a batch of ore produced no satisfactory iron, but simply a lump of fused iron and stone filled with air bubbles. This was called *nganga*, and was thrown away. It was never resmelted. The apprentice whose ore had failed to produce iron was told to go and make a sacrifice (see Chapter 28), and the furnace was said on such an occasion to have been sterile (*thata*).

Every smith when working either at smelting or smithing was naked save for a bunch of leaves over the penis.

There is no doubt that in the minds of the Kikuyu the furnace was regarded as female and the bellows as male (though they were not directly spoken of as such). The iron that came to the furnace was a birth that resulted from the contact of the male and the female parts. The same symbolism is found in other Bantu tribes.

On the night before a smith and his apprentices were going to start (p.307) smelting, none of them might have sexual intercourse, and during all days that smelting was in progress this rule had to be kept. If they failed to observe this rule, the furnace would become barren.

The Smithy

In the old days a smith always had his smelting furnace in his smithy (*kĩganda*), which was a shelter with a good roof but no walls. It was usually built fairly near to the smith's home. When smithing, as distinct from smelting, the charcoal fire was lit in the same furnace and the same bellows were used, though in some districts north of the Chania River smiths had a separate bellows and furnace for their smithing

Besides the furnace (*riiko rĩa nyũngũ*), bellows (*miura*), and nozzles (*ngerũa*) already described, every smith had an anvil (*ihiga rĩa ũturi*), a big hammer (*kĩriha kĩa ngundi*), a small hammer

(*kĩriha kĩa mũtĩ*), tongs (*mĩĩhato*), and a broken potsherd (*rũgĩo*). He also had a vast quantity of bits of pig-iron, old broken swords, etc.

Although the smithy was open and away from the homestead, the smith never took anything home at night or hid anything, for he knew that no one would dare to steal anything because of the evil that would automatically result from theft from a smithy.

If a man went to a smith to have something made for him and sat down to watch, he had to be very careful of his behaviour or he would find himself having to pay a fine of a goat. If, for instance, when the red hot iron was drawn from the furnace, anyone said,"*Kaĩ nĩ gĩtune-ĩ!*" ('How red it is!'), the remark cost him a goat. If a spark flew out and lighted on spectator and he showed any emotion or recognition of the fact, or said "*Hĩ! Hĩ!*" he was fined a goat. If he went inside the smithy or handled anything there he was fined. There was a special taboo against touching an unfinished object that a smith was working on. The only object in a smithy that an outsider could touch with impunity was the bellows, and a customer who showed ability to handle the bellows was allowed, even encouraged, to work one pair while his order was being made.

An apprentice who had worked for some time simply as a collector of ore and as a worker of the bellows, and who now wanted to show his master that he could proceed further and start learning to handle the (p.308) hammers and other tools, would deliberately pick up a hammer or some other forbidden object, whereupon he would be made to pay the customary fine and would be asked why he had acted as he had. It was then the correct procedure for him to explain that he had broken the taboo because he wanted to learn the art of his master, after which he would be admitted to the next stage of his apprenticeship.

Working the Iron

When a blacksmith was at work he was assisted by one or more of his apprentices, who worked the bellows, fed the fire with charcoal, and generally assisted, at the same time watching all that the smith did so as to learn the art.

When a smith was starting on a new piece of pig-iron to make a sword or other article, he heated the iron in his furnace until it was red hot, and then took it out with his tongs, which he used to hold it while he was working. In the later stages of making a sword, knife, or similar object, he fitted a rough wooden handle (*kĩremwa*) to one end, and heated only one part of the object at a time, holding it by the temporary handle. Then he transferred the handle to the other end and worked the part that had been in the handle. As a smith worked, he dipped his hot iron into water from time to time, but the art of tempering was little known and some swords were of such soft iron that they could be bent, while others were sufficiently tempered to be springy, and if strained too much they would snap, for they were a form of steel.

Polishing

When a sword or a spear had been made it was polished by rubbing it with a round piece of quartz or granite. The polisher was called *mũthũi*, and his was a hard and skilled job. He was always rewarded for his work by payment with either a goatskin, a piece of pig-iron, or a broken sword.

A sword or spear to be polished was laid on the stem of a banana tree (*mũramba*), and pegged down to hold it firmly. It was then rubbed with special granite or quartz rubbing stones (*ngomongo*), and at intervals it was brushed with the fibre of banana bark (*mbuutha*). When one side (p.309) was finished, it was turned over and the other side was polished likewise. Owing to

the cost of this polishing, only fighting swords, spears, and depilating tweezers were normally polished; most other iron objects made by a smith (as distinct from a wire worker) were left black.

The Purchase of Iron Goods from a Blacksmith

A regular customer could always go to a smith and get small objects, such as ankle bells, small knives, arrow heads, etc. free, but a man who wanted a large object like a sword or spear had to pay for the labour involved, and also had either to provide the metal or buy it from the smith.

A man who wanted to acquire a sword or a spear or other iron objects requiring a large amount of iron had four options:

1. He could acquire pig-iron from the apprentices by purchase with food, skins, or anything else they wanted.

2. He could acquire broken swords, spears, and knives from his friends by purchase.

3. He could go to a smith and buy a ready-made spear, sword, or whatever it was he wanted.

4. He could buy what he required from the apprentices, who always had a supply of iron objects in hand, made for them by their masters from their share of pig-iron.

In the case of 1 or 2, the man would take his pig-iron or his broken sword, etc. to a smith and say, "Make me a sword (or a spear, etc). from these". In return for his work the smith would be given an extra piece of pig-iron (*gĩkama*), or a broken sword for his own use.

A man who was not a regular customer or personal friend of the smith's had to buy even the smallest objects with grain or other barter objects such as skins, etc. Razors were bought by women with a small quantity of cooked food, which they took to the smith to eat while he worked.

Articles made by a Blacksmith

Mũũndwa

The crowbar used in digging up iron ore was a short iron bar pointed at one end.

p.310
Mĩĩhato ya Aturi

These rough tongs were made by blacksmiths for their own use. They were made of two long pieces of thin iron bar through which holes were made about 6in. from one end, a rivet through these holes holding them together.

Kĩriha kĩa Ngundi

The blacksmith made his bigger hammer from a thick bar of iron. It tapered slightly and was about 8in. long and 1½in. thick at its greatest diameter. It was shaped like a modern chemist's pestle.

Kĩriha kĩa Mũtĩ

The small-handled hammer the blacksmith made for himself was of a peculiar shape and was used in a curious fashion which has been well described by Routledge and needs no further description.

Ngeeca

A small cold chisel, like an English one, was made for cutting iron wire and iron bars.

Mwenjerere

The fighting spear used by warriors was similar in form to those used by the Maasai. Spears were in three parts, the two iron ends were linked by a wooden handle in the middle, the handle of the *mwenjerere* spear being a short one. The blade on one end of this spear was about 3ft. long and two-edged with a strong rib running down the centre on both its faces. At the base of the blade was a socket to take one end of the wooden handle. This blade was called *ithũmbĩ*. The second half of the spear was a round sectioned, slightly tapering iron bar pointed at the bottom. At the top, it had a socket to fit the other end of the wooden (p.311) handle, and so make the complete spear. This butt end was called *mũra*, and the sockets were called *mbũthũ cia itimũ*.

Kĩberethi

An old man's spear was used more as a staff than as a fighting weapon, but was useful as a weapon if one was attacked by wild animals. This spear had a small, leaf-shaped blade about 18in. long ending in a socket, and a small butt end, usually square in section, also ending in a socket at one end. The handle, instead of being about 8in. long as in a fighting spear, was about 4ft long. The handles of fighting spears and of elders' spears were made either of *mũrigi*, *mũricũ*, or *mũnderendu* wood.

Mũkũng'i

Another form of spear was used by old men, and also by older warriors who found the *mwenjerere* too heavy. This spear had a small, leaf-shaped blade with a long iron stem of about 18in., ending in a socket. The butt, too, was longer than in a *kĩberethi*, being about 18in., while the wooden handle was about 1ft long. The blade of the *mũkũng'i* spear was always black, the metal surface never being polished (*gũthũa*) like the blades of *mwenjerere* or *kĩberethi* spears.

Rũhiũ rũa Njora

The two-edged fighting sword of the Kikuyu had a long, leaf-shaped blade with a marked rib down the centre of the blade on both faces. These swords varied in form slightly according to whether they were for warriors or for older men. A warrior's sword was longer and had a narrower blade than an elder's sword, which often had a blade 2½in. wide at its widest point, while a warrior's was seldom more than 1½in. wide. These swords were always polished, and were carried in sheaths, which will be described under "Leather Work".

Mengere (*also called Rũhiũ rũa Mengere*)

A two-edged knife was made like a sword, but with a much wider blade. (p.312) It never had a sheath, and its black surface was never polished. It was used for clearing bush, cutting down poles for building, and digging holes for posts in hut building. Both the *rũhiũ rũa njora* and the *mengerere* were hafted by the tang technique. The handles were made of the roots of *mũtũndũ* or *mũkũrũe* trees.

Kahiũ ga Kũrĩma

A small, two-edged knife was made on the same pattern as a sword but with a blade only about 12in. long. It was never polished. It was hafted by the tang technique, and was used for planting and weeding crops.

Raũ

A still smaller, two-edged knife was used for skinning, cutting up meat, and for killing oxen by driving it into the neck. The knife used by bee-keepers to cut honeycombs was a variety of *raũ* and was called *raũ ya gũthũya*.

Kahiũ ka Nguo

A woman's small, two-edged knife was used exclusively for scraping leather garments from time to time to remove dirt that had adhered to them. The blade was about 6in. long, or less.

Kahiũ

A small, two-edged knife without any special designation was made for such purposes as peeling sweet potatoes.

All the above swords and knives had a mid-rib which was called *mũkiha* (literally, a muscle),.

Kahiũ ka Mwenji

Warriors had small, two-edged knives without mid-ribs and with a blade about 6in. long which they used for shaving the hair from their legs and arms.

p.313
Rũenji

A razor was made of a little, flat, triangular bit of iron beaten very thin and sharpened at the edge forming the base of the triangle; it was not hafted. The apex of the triangle was always bent over, and the base of the triangle, instead of being a straight line, was sometimes slightly curved. These razors were used for shaving the head, but not the face, which was depilated and never shaved.

Rũenji rũa Irua

A special "razor" made in the same form as those used for shaving the head, but of even thinner iron, was used by women operators for the operation of clitoridectomy.

Kahiũ ka Irua

This was a small, two-edged knife without a mid-rib and made of iron beaten very thin, and was made specially for the men who operated on boys at initiations. The thin blade was leaf-shaped, and the handle of wood was always covered with leather.

Mũguĩ wa Kahiũ

A 2in. leaf-shaped arrow head with a mid-rib and a tang was the commonest form of arrow used.

Mũguĩ wa Mbugi

A small, iron arrow tip with a metal foreshaft was made on the Kamba pattern.

Mũguĩ wa Mũrarangaĩ

An arrow head made like *mũguĩ wa kahiũ*, but with a series of barbs at the base, was made on the Maasai pattern.

p.314
Ndĩa

A bleeding arrow was made not only by smiths but also by wire pullers. The metal heads of the bleeding arrows were little flat bits of iron with a rounded tip.

Ruoro

A branding iron, or "poker" consisted of a round bar of iron, about 10in. long, tapering at both ends, and about ¼in. in diameter at the thickest point. One tapering end was hafted into a handle. It was heated in the fire, and then used to burn holes in axe handles for hafting, and in beehives for the pegs which fastened the boards at each end, and also to brand the owner's mark on a beehive. Such a poker was also used to cauterise swollen glands in cattle.

Mũkuha

An awl was made of little bits of iron, round in section, ⅛in. thick and tapering to a sharp point. Most awls were about 3-5in. long and hafted by the tang technique.

Ngũũri

Small tweezers were made from a single piece of iron, bent over in the middle, and with both ends beaten out into blades with a cutting edge at right angles to the axis of the iron. These tweezers were used pulling out facial and pubic hair, which was never shaved.

Ithanwa

An axe head was in the shape of an isosceles triangle with a slightly curved 2in. base, which formed the cutting edge. The sides were 6-8in. long. The metal used was about ½in. thick and it was never polished. It was hafted by the tang technique into special wooden handles which were bored with a red hot poker (*ruoro*).

p.315
Gathanwa ka Njũa (*A small Axe for Skins*)

A special tool with a curved working edge was used for scraping skins. It had a short wooden handle, and the blade was about 3in. long and 1½in. wide at the widest point.

Ngomi

An adze was made like a small axe but hafted at right angles to the axis of the shaft, and inclined at an angle. The blade was about 4in. long and tanged.

Thiya

An iron blade exactly like an axe head was sometimes hafted on the end of a long wooden handle and used as a chisel for making such things as beehives and mortars.

Gathanwa (*A small Axe*)

A small, iron chisel shaped like an axe head was used by a woodworker for making notches to hold the end boards of a hive.

Thegethi

A type of woodworking gauge or chisel was used for scraping out things like wooden snuffboxes. It was often used like a drill.

Mbugi

Cattle and goat bells were made of a piece of iron hammered to a thin sheet and bent over and round a separate tongue called *mũriha*, which was attached to the body of the bell by a ring called *gĩcũhĩ kĩa mbugi*. Large *mbugi* were sometimes called *nduora*.

p.316
Ngũrũkũri

This was a variant of the ordinary ox bell and had a deeper note.

Kĩĩgamba

A knee bell was made in the shape of a large pea pod, with one side slightly open. Inside the iron pod were a number of iron balls (*ngaragari*) representing the peas in the pod. These knee bells were patterned on the pods of wild leguminous plants, which were also sometimes used as rattles.

Ngingiri

Ankle bells were also made. These were small, iron "pods" each with one iron ball inside, and a number were worn together.

Mũthiore

A special spiral iron ornament was made by the smiths for themselves and for their wives, out of thin iron beaten into a kind of wire but not pulled like the iron wire of the wire workers. No one, except a smith or a member of his family, could wear a *mũthiore*.

Gĩturo

A thick iron bracelet was made by blacksmiths for men. It was worn just below the armpit. It was like a *mũkang'a*, which, however, was fitted by a wire worker. (The wire worker also made an arm ornament called *gĩturo*, made from thick wire).

Mũkang'a

A thick iron bracelet was made by blacksmiths but polished and fitted by a wire worker.

p.317
Mwĩhato wa Agucia

Wire workers had a special hand vice made for them by the smiths. It has been well described and figured by Routledge.

Ũta wa Agucia

The iron plate with graded holes which the wire workers used in processing iron wire was made for them by the smiths.

Ngũũri ya Agucia

Special small pliers were made by smiths for wire workers to use in chain making.

Mũthiimo wa Agucia

A hollow iron tube was made for wire workers by a smith.

Kagera ka Matemo

A piece of flat iron like a thin ruler was made by the smiths for use by wire workers in their craft.

Wire workers

Making iron and brass wire and making various ornaments and chains from this wire was a very specialised profession, and a man would become a wire worker (*mũgucia*, literally, a wire puller)

only after a long apprenticeship and payment of the appropriate fees. First a ram had to be handed over as a fee for being allowed to start learning how to handle the master's instruments. After the apprentice had acquired some measure of skill, he had to give a barrel of honey and a he-goat to the master. A little later another barrel of honey and a second he-goat was demanded (p.318) of him when he finally decided to set up on his own, the former apprentice had to pay five more sheep and goats.

The principal tools of a wire worker were the following: several iron plates (*mota* singular *ũta*) with different sized holes in them through which the wire was pulled to the required gauge, an anvil (*ihiga*) of granite, one or two hand vices (*mwĩhato wa mũgucia*), one or two little cold chisels (*ngeeca* or *gathanwa*), a pair of pliers (*ngũũri ya mũgucia*), a small hammer (*kĩriha*), and a hollow iron tube (*mũthiimo*). These tools he kept in a bag.

Every wire worker had his own workshop (*kĩganda*), which was an open round hut similar to a smithy. Here he set up his special wooden block which was used to hold the iron draw plate when he was pulling wire through the holes.

Iron, copper, and brass wire were all obtained by barter from the Maasai and Akamba, and they were usually bought in a thick ¼in. gauge. This was the raw material from which a wire worker made all the various thinner gauge wires which he needed, down to a wire less than 1mm thick.

To process the wire, one end of ¼in. wire was filed down with a piece of granite until it was about $^{3}/_{16}$in. thick, and this thin end was passed through one of the holes in the brass plate that was of this particular gauge. Then the whole length of ¼in. wire was pulled forcibly through this hole so that it all became $^{3}/_{16}$in. gauge. The process was repeated with a hole ⅛in. and then about $^{1}/_{32}$in. if wire of these thinner gauges was required.

The pulling process was a difficult one, especially in the early stages, and was performed as follows. The wire worker had a special post of hard wood about 5ft long fixed very firmly into the ground with only about 2ft of it above ground. At the top of this he had a shelf cut on one side to set the draw-plate on, and the top of the post was also notched at a level with the shelf. Having threaded the filed end of the wire through the necessary hole on his draw-plate, the plate was put on the shelf of the post with the filed end projecting through the notch. This projecting end was then seized in the hand vice, which was firmly clamped. (The wire worker's vice and method of clamping has been well described by Routledge and need not be further described here). The wire worker fastened a leather strap round his back and passed each end of it over end of the vice before tying it. He then pulled hard to start the wire on its course through the hole. Having got it started, he enlisted the aid of all the bystanders (there were naturally a good many who had come as customers for various wares), and all of them, young men and girls alike, took hold of a much longer leather strap which he fastened to the (p.319) shorter one that was round his waist, and under his direction they pulled steadily on this and so gradually pulled all the wire through the plate and reduced its thickness.

In the later stages when only thin wire was pulled, the wire worker could manage alone or with the help of one apprentice, but pulling wire from ¼in. gauge to $^{1}/_{16}$in. gauge needed a great deal of manpower. If the pullers pulled unevenly, the wire would snap.

Before wire was pulled it was heated in an ordinary wood fire made of wood from castor oil trees. This treatment was said to soften it and make it easier to pull, but the wire was to all intents and purposes drawn cold.

A person who wanted iron wire ornaments or chain made from iron wire either took thick gauge trade wire to the wire worker, who first drew it to the requisite gauge and then made the article, or else he bought the finished articles direct from the wire worker. In the former case, the wire worker had the right to appropriate about $^{1}/_{3}$ of the wire for his own use as a fee for the work of drawing the wire and making the ornaments.

Iron Articles made by the WireWorker

Mũrĩnga

This was a coiled iron wire bracelet of anything up to 20 or more coils, and was made and fitted by the wire workers. Men wore these coiled iron armlets only on the left arm below the elbow and down to the wrist, but women and girls also wore them on the right arm and on the legs below the knees. Often the top and bottom coils of these armlets and leg ornaments were bound round with thin copper or bronze wire. This binding process was called *kũhunya*. The ornament could be taken off only by uncoiling it.

Mũhunyo

A coiled wire ornament similar to *mũrĩnga* was made of thick iron wire round which copper and iron wire of thin gauge had been tightly bound for a decorative effect. A *mũhunyo* was worn on the arm between the wrist and elbow, and was worn only by rich men, being a definite sign of wealth (*ũtonga*). Rich men sometimes gave their favourite wives *mũhunyo*. It could be taken off only by uncoiling it.

p.320
Gĩturo

In addition to the *gĩturo* made by blacksmiths, the wire workers sometimes made an ornament of iron wire which had the same name. It was made with about eight coils and was worn by men on the right arm just below the armpit. It was never worn by women. It was so made that it could be slipped on and off again without having to be unwound.

Ndanga

Iron, copper, or brass wristlets were made, consisting of a small length of thick wire bent round so that the ends met. This ornament was worn by young men and young girls. Each person usually had about eight *ndanga*, some of them iron and some copper and brass.

Mũthanga wa Matemo

This leg ornament was made by winding iron wire spirally round a special tool called *kagera ka matemo*, which was like a thin, iron ruler, slightly concave on one side. This ruler, after being bound round with iron wire, was laid with its concave side upwards on the anvil and the coils were all cut with the chisel (*ngeeca*). They were then slipped off the "ruler" and were threaded onto a piece of leather thong cut to the same size and thickness as the ruler. This leather thong bound round with the iron wire was then used as an ornament below the knee (right or left) by men. On the other leg below the knee, the same man would always have the next ornament, *mũthanga wa kũhakwo*.

Mũthanga wa Kũhakwo

This was made in a way similar to the above, but after the iron wire had been wound round the *kagera ka matemo* it was not cut, but slipped off as a spiral spring, through which a leather thong was passed.

Nyarũrũng'a

Girls sometimes wore an anklet made of one iron circlet of thick wire to which were threaded many iron rings about 1in. in diameter.

p.321
Mũkunju (*also called Mũkunyo wa Ngingo*)

This was an iron wire collar made by winding thin gauge iron wire spirally round thicker gauge wire. It was an ornament worn by old men instead of the *mũrumbo* described next, which was similar in some respects. An old man usually wore two or three *mĩkunju* (singular *mũkunju*).

Mũrumbo

This was a necklet made by winding thin gauge iron wire spirally round a thicker gauge, and then bending it into a rough circle with a diameter of about 5in. The ends were fastened by the following method. At one end the spiral winding stopped about ½in. before the end of the foundation wire, while at the other end the spirally wound wire projected about ½in. beyond the end of the foundation wire. The projecting end of the foundation wire could then be inserted into the projecting spiral at the other end, and so make a neat join. At the centre of the necklet there were fixed two or three very small iron objects called *mbugi*, like goat bells, and the clappers of these minute "bells" were lengths of iron chain hanging down about 16in. Very often a *mũrumbo* had as many as eight *mbugi* and chains dangling from the centre of the front, so that the ornament might almost be described as a "collar and tie".

Kĩrengeeri

Iron wire chain was made by the wire workers and was used for making many ornaments as well as for plain chain necklaces. The chain work of the Akamba was far more complicated than the single wire chain making of the Kikuyu, and the Kikuyu preferred Kamba chain if they could get it. Kikuyu chain was made in the method admirably described by Routledge (p.95), so that it need not be described again here. The only inaccuracy in Routledge's description is that he speaks of the man as a smith, whereas the chain makers, or wire workers (*agucia*), although smiths in the sense that they did work in metal, were more like "jewellers", and were quite distinct from the *aturi*, or smiths proper.

p.322
Gĩcũhĩ gĩa Kĩara

Finger rings were worn mainly by women and girls; usually men had at most one thumb ring, although wire workers and smiths often wore a number of rings, like women. These rings were single circles of iron wire with the ends joined. The wire was sometimes beaten to *flatten it slightly*.

Gĩcomoya

Iron "tape" about a ¼in. in width was sometimes used to make a ring called *gĩcomoya*.

Ngome

This was a special form of iron or brass ring that was worn only by rich men and medicine-men. They were shield shaped and sheath like, with an incised pattern.

Mindo

This was an earring made to look like a large "eye" of a "hook and eye". It was made of iron wire of about ⅛in. gauge wound round spirally with iron wire of a much thinner gauge. A length of this wire having been prepared, a piece about 2in. long was cut off and bent to the requisite shape. To each end was hammered a small sheet of either brass or copper so as to make a rounded end.

Gĩcũhĩ kĩa Gũtũ

A small spiral of iron wire which had been bound round with thinner gauge wire was worn in the ear-lobes by men. Sometimes it had lengths of iron chain about 6in. long hanging down in a fringe, in which case it was called *gĩcũhĩ kĩa rĩtiena*.

p.323
Hang'i

Although not strictly "ironwork", the earring called *hang'i* must be described here because the foundation was a thin, ½mm gauge iron wire specially prepared by the wire drawers, and the *hang'i* themselves were actually made by the wire workers and not by ordinary workers in beads. *Hang'i* were circles of thin iron wire on to which were threaded very small pink, red, dark blue, black, and white beads. Young women and initiated girls wore a big bunch of *hang'i* on each ear, usually 30 or more to a bunch. Young warriors also wore small bunches *of hang'i* for certain dances. Sometimes a customer brought his own beads to have them made up, but more often the wire workers stocked *hang'i* and sold enough for one ear for a goatskin or a piece of iron. A man who had several daughters out to be initiated and who would therefore need many *hang'i*, would give the wire worker a live ewe or she-goat, and for this he would make up enough *hang'i* for both ears of three girls, that is, six sets. The very thin gauge wire used for *hang'i* was called *thiimo*.

Njũũgũ

This was a spiral of iron wire about 1in. long and ¼in. in diameter, which was used for fastening leather thongs used as accessories to ornaments. For instance, *mũthanga wa matemo* and *mũthanga wa kũhakwo* were both fastened with *njũũgũ*, and so was the leather strap used to support the brass earrings of a man who had qualified to hold initiation ceremonies at his own homestead.

Ngome

Not to be confused with the *ngome* ring above, this *ngome* was a spiral iron object made by the wire drawers from iron wire beaten flat into an iron "tape". It was put on the end of a sword sheath to finish it off neatly.

Ndĩa

Bleeding arrows were made by both smiths and wire workers and have been described under "Articles Made by a Blacksmith".

p.324
Copper and Brasswork

Copper and brass work was so rare in Kikuyu before 1870 that a man who had an ornament made of either of these metals was looked upon in awe. Most of the available copper and bronze was

used for special ornamentations on iron ornaments in the forms already described. Brass and copper became commoner from about 1885 onwards, and by the time of the establishment of the first English government station in Kikuyu country, both metals were widely used.

No smith ever handled copper or brass, and it was only wire workers who worked these metals, since it was imported in the form of thick wire. Copper was called *mũnyaka* and brass was called *mwerũ* or *gĩcango*. The things that were sometimes made from brass or copper were the coiled *mũrĩnga* bracelet, the upper arm coil called *gĩturo*, and finger rings (*gĩcũhĩ gĩa kĩara*). Chain (*kĩrengeeri*) was never made of brass. No copper or brass ornament had a special name of its own, and those made were made according to the already existing iron patterns. Only in more recent times have new ornaments made of these metals appeared, and having distinctive names.

Woodwork

The Kikuyu made a great many articles from wood, and many of these required comparatively little skill or craftmanship and so no special tools. They were therefore made as required by anyone who needed them. Other wooden objects, such as beehive barrels, stools, and mortars, required both special skill and special tools, and these were made by the professional woodworkers (*aai*, singular *mwai*).

Most professional woodworkers were specialists, and one who made beehives and mortars seldom also made stools, while a stool specialist seldom knew how to make beehives. At the same time, there were a few individuals who were specialists at both, and there was no taboo against this. Unlike smiths and wireworkers, professional woodworkers were not jealous of their profession, and a man who wanted to take it up could easily make friends with a woodworker and learn the craft without any recognised apprenticeship fees having to be paid. At most he would make beer for his master to cement their friendship.

A woodworker used a number of special tools in his craft: a chisel (p.325) (*thiya*), made by hafting an ordinary Kikuyu axe head into an end of a handle about 4ft long and 2in. in diameter, with a collar of raw rhino hide (*ndũkũyũ*) fitted round the hafted end; a small iron chisel, called (*gathanwa*) (little axe) owing to its being shaped like a miniature axe head, which was used to make the notches (*cuka*) for holding the end boards of a hive; a big, two-edged knife (*mengere*); an axe (*ithanwa*); a branding iron or "poker" (*ruoro*) for making the holes where the pegs to hold the end boards of a hive were inserted; and an adze (*ngomi*).

For sand paper in connection with all woodwork the Kikuyu used the rough leaves of *mũkuũ* (the leaf was called *ikuũ*) or else a piece of pumice stone (*ithaatha*).

Articles made of Wood

(For the proper classification of all Kikuyu trees and plants please refer to the Botanical appendix).

Mwatũ wa Njũkĩ (*Beehive*)

In the olden times a percentage of beehives were made by cutting a log to the required length, splitting it in half, hollowing out the two halves separately, and then fastening them together again by riveting them with stitches of *mũũgũ* creeper. This practice was gradually superceded by the one of hollowing out the log without splitting it open, and this is method which will be described below. When a man wanted beehives, he had first to select a suitable tree on his own family estate, or, if he had none on the family estate, to go and look for a suitable tree in the forest that was as yet not owned by any Kikuyu, but which belonged to Wandorobo.

Let us, however, assume that he had a tree on his own family estate. Having selected the tree, he and his family felled it and sent a message to a woodworker to come and make it into beehives and mortars. The recognised custom was that the first block at the base of the tree belonged to the owner of the tree (whether he had it made into a hive or a mortar), the second belonged to the professional woodworker, the third to the owner, and so on, with the proviso that if the trunk of the tree provided an uneven number of blocks from which hives and mortars could be made, the odd one went to the woodworker and not to the owner of the tree.

p.326
The following were the best trees for making beehives: *mũkũi*, *mũthaitĩ*, *mũgumo*, *mũkũrũe*, *mũtatĩ*, *mũcagatha*, *mũnunga*, *mwenyere*, *mũkũyũ*, *mũrurĩ*, *mũringa* and *mũraraciĩ*. Occasionally a big *mũkeũ* was used.

The tree having been felled and the trunk cut into lengths of about 2½ft, the woodworker started his part of the work. He dug a hole a little larger than the diameter of the log he was going to work on, and about 1ft deep. Into this hole he set the log vertically, pressing down the earth all round so that the log was absolutely firm. Taking his *thiya*, or long chisel, in both hands, he proceeded to bring it down on to the top of the log at different angles, and thus gradually cut out a rough hole in the centre. This hole he deepened and enlarged in circumference until he had excavated a rough hollow in the upper end of the log. Then he pulled out the log and inserted the hollowed end into the hole in the ground and worked at the other end until finally he had a hole right through the log. Having achieved this, he continued to work with his chisel until he had smoothed out the whole interior of the log, leaving about 2in. of wood as a wall all round. He now proceeded to trim the outside of the log, first with his chisel and then with his big two-edged knife, until he had reduced the wall of the barrel to about 1in. in thickness all round. The next task was to fit the end boards (*hengero*).

A block of wood was split into rough planks, which were then trimmed down with an adze into boards about 1in. thick. One of these was laid on the ground and the hive stood perpendicularly on it. Reaching down inside the barrel, the woodworker scratched on the surface of the board all round the inner edge of the hive, thus marking off the shape of the barrel. He then cut the plank to the shape thus marked, but left two projecting pieces, one on each side. On the hive base he cut notches to receive these projections. The end board was then fitted into one end of the barrel in such a way that the edges of the barrel overlapped about 1in. In this overlap two or three holes were bored with the red-hot poker, and into these holes pegs (*hindigo*) were driven. The board at the other end was similarly fitted.

The board at whichever was the smaller end of the barrel was punctured in three or four places with a poker, so as to make holes for the bees to go in and out. The hive was permanently closed at this end, and opened at the other end only when the beekeeper needed to see inside, or to collect honey from it.

Of the hives that became the property of the woodworker in return for his labour, he usually sold most, if not all, one hive being worth a goatskin or a big bag of corn.

p.327
Mbogoro ya Mwatũ

The forked hanging stick used for putting up beehives has been described under beekeeping in Chapter 7.

Mwatũ wa Irio

An extra large barrel hollowed from a tree trunk in exactly the same way as described for a beehive was used as a food-safe inside the hut.

Kĩhembe

A small drum or barrel made from a hollowed out log was used for storing honey. It had leather ends.

Ndĩrĩ

The only trees regarded as really suitable for making mortars, or, as they are sometimes called, stamping blocks, were *mũiri*, *mũringa*, and *mũgaa*, but other softer woods were used if the above trees were not available. A mortar was made by the same professional woodworkers who made hives, but only one end of the log was hollowed, and the hollow was made in the shape of an inverted, truncated cone. The lower half of the log was tapered slightly downwards, and was always dug into the ground to stand firm. (The mortars with a wide base that stand firmly without being dug into the ground are an innovation of recent years).

Mũũthĩ

A pestle was made of hard wood such as *mũngirima* and *mũiri*, and was about 4ft long and 2in. in diameter. They were usually made by the woodworker, but some people made their own for their wives' use.

Mũkongoro (*also called Mũgogo wa Ndĩrĩ*)

This was the special mortar for crushing sugar-cane for making beer. It was never individual property but was made for the whole of a village (p.328) by agreement among the elders of the village. A big tree was cut down *mũiri* if possible, and the trunk cut to a length of about 12-14ft. The men, under the guidance of a skilled woodworker, would adze away the top of the log to flatten it, and dig out a whole series of circular holes about 1ft apart and 8in. deep, with a diameter at the top of about 6in. These holes were shaped like inverted truncated cones. If the tree was a big one, there was a double row of holes.

As soon as the *mũkongoro* was ready, every family in the village provided a few sticks of sugar-cane for a communal brew of beer, which was crushed and prepared only by women past childbearing and very old men. This beer was set to brew in the hut of a very old woman, and when ready, could be consumed only by men who were so old they no longer had sexual intercourse with their wives. It was called *njohi ya mũrugũrio wa ndĩrĩ*, (beer for the ceremonial "opening" of the mortar, on the occasion of its first use).

Mũharatĩ

The making of cattle or sheep troughs required special ceremonies. When a man wanted a new trough, he first chose a suitable tree: *mũkũrũe*, *mũringa*, or *mũtũndũ*, and then brewed honey beer. On the day chosen for cutting down the tree he went to it taking beer, goat's milk, finger millet grain, and *ira* powder. He prayed at the foot of the tree pouring out offerings of these things, and sipping some of the beer and blessing himself with it by spitting it on his breast. Then the tree was cut down and he and his friends set to work with adzes and a big chisel make it into a trough like a small, rough, dug-out canoe. When the trough was ready, more of these offerings were poured out over the stump of the tree (*gĩtira*), and a *mũthakwa* or *mũkenia* bush was planted beside the

stump "to replace the tree cut down". The prayers were offered first to God, and then a second time to the male ancestors. There was no offering to the spirit of the tree.

When the ceremony was over the trough was shouldered by several men and taken towards the owner's home, but before they got there they had to put the trough down in someone else's homestead and feed the lambs and kids of that homestead with saline earth from it. Then they picked up the trough again and took it to the homestead for which it was destined. Here more beer was poured out at either end of the place where the trough was to be set down, and more prayers to the ancestors were offered up. This done, the lambs and kids of the homestead and any sheep or goats in the huts had to be given saline earth in the new (p.329) trough at once, after which the owner and the men who had helped to make and carry the trough consumed the rest of the beer that had been brewed for the occasion. No trough could be used until these ceremonies had been performed, otherwise the livestock that used the trough would not flourish.

Gĩka

The lower or "female" part of a fire drill was made from *mũtarakwa*, *mũgumo*, *mũcũgũ*, *mũcatha*, *kagutu*, *mũrigi*, or from the roots of *mũimba-igũrũ*. This part of the fire drill was cut into a rough oblong, with fairly flat sides, and was about ½in. thick. The hole into which the male fire stick was to be inserted was started with the point of a knife about ½in. from the edge of the *gĩka*, and then a notch was cut in the side of the *gĩka* so as to meet the hole. The powdered wood and sparks resulting from drilling came out of this notch.

Rũrĩndĩ

The drill or "male" part of the fire stick was made from any of the same woods as already listed for the *gĩka*, except *mũrigi* and *mũimba-igũrũ*. Fire making will be more fully described in Chapter 28, for it was chiefly for ceremonial fires that fire sticks were used, and seldom for ordinary household fires, which were started by using embers from another hut or from a garden fire.

Mũũndũri

This was a large wooden spoon used for mashing boiled foods (see Chapter 8), and it was usually made from the wood of *mũrimandũ*, which did not give any unpleasant taste to the food.

Rũego

This was a small wooden spoon, shaped rather like a long-handled mustard spoon. It was made specially for cleaning out the seeds and pulp from bottle-shaped gourds to prepare them for use (see "Types of Gourds and their Uses"). It was usually made from *mũkandu* or *mũhĩnda-hĩndĩ* wood.

p.330
Kĩbĩri

This was a special stirrer for stirring soup to a froth. A short, straight, thin stick of *mũtathi* or *mũngirima* wood was first cut to a length of about 18in., and a diameter of ½in. Then the rib of an ox was split and cut to provide two slightly curved bits of bone about 3in. long, 1in. and ¼in. wide. Each of these was notched at the middle of one side so that the two could be fitted together into the form of a cross. On end of the stick was split into four and the four divisions of the bone cross inserted into the four angles of the split stick, the top of which was then tied together again. The bits of ox rib were sometimes replaced by a single vertebra of a he-goat, or by two little bits of wood of about the same dimensions and similarly treated.

Gacungi (*also called Kĩbuutha*)

This was an ingenious strainer made of one piece of wood, and looking exactly like a washing up mop. It was made as follows. A stem of *mũtathi* wood about 8in. long and 1in. in diameter was carefully and slowly pared down towards one end from a little below the middle of the stick. Each shaving was left attached to the lower end. Working round and round thus, a man pared off several hundred shavings, all being left attached at the base and curling round until a "brush" had been formed. This object was used to dip into soups to collect and remove the scum and floating bits of fat before the soup was consumed.

Mũnyago

The Kikuyu digging stick has already been described in Chapter 6 and need not be described again here.

Mũro

The light, women's digging stick used in cultivation and also used by men for digging up yams has been described in Chapter 6.

Gĩtugĩ kĩa Marigũ

Banana props have already been described in Chapter 6. They were made chiefly from *mũnderendu*, *mũirũthi*, *mũhũgũ*, and *mũkindũri* wood. In the old days a man prepared his banana props carefully by peeling off the bark after heating it in a fire (*kũriga*—to char and scrape off). They were then dried before being used.

Mũhĩrĩgo

This was the plank used in hut construction, cut and adzed from solid logs. It has already been described in Chapter 5.

Gĩtugĩ kĩa Nyũmba

The type of roof support used in hut building has been described in Chapter 5.

Kĩhengere kĩa Riigĩ

This was a flat plank carefully cut and used as a door step to a hut. It also served the purpose of acting as a sliding surface or sill so that the door hurdle (*riigĩ*) slid into place easily when it was shut or opened.

Kĩhengere kĩa Ũrĩrĩ

Instead of making a bed in the way that has already been described in Chapter 5, some Kikuyu cut a big, broad, single board plank about 6ft long and 4ft wide, adzed down to about 1in. thick. It was used as a "mattress" on the bed.

Kĩhingo gĩa Ikũmbĩ

The adzed wooden board called *kĩhengere* used for closing the doors of a granary has been described in Chapter 5.

p.332
Gĩtĩ

A Kikuyu stool was made by a special woodworker known as *mwai wa itĩ*. The tools used by such a craftsman were: an axe, an adze, and a big two-edged knife. The best woods for stools were *mũringa*, *mũnunga mũkũyũ*, *mũhũtĩ*, *mũrurĩ*, *mũthaiti*, and *mũkũi*. Other woods were also used but were less satisfactory.

A man needing a stool chose and felled a suitable tree, and then called in the woodworker; together they cut the trunk into blocks about 10in. long, which the woodworker then turned into "one piece" stools. The first stool, from the base of the tree, went to the owner of the tree, the second to the woodworker, the third to the owner, and the fourth to the woodworker, but even if there was wood enough for more than eight stools, the woodworker still did not get more than four. The balance went to the owner, for it was held that stool making was lighter work than hive making, so it was not customary for the woodworker to take the bigger proportion of the objects made, as it was in the case of beehives. Some stools were made with three legs and some with four, but there was no question of custom involved, as it was purely of individual choice. The seat of every stool was slightly hollowed out and was saucer shaped. Stools varied in size from a diameter of 16in. or more to smaller ones with a diameter of 5in. Kikuyu stools for ordinary use were never decorated in any way, but were polished with castor oil.

Gĩtĩ kĩa Mũrumbo (*also called Njũng'wa*)

This was a special, light-weight, low stool used exclusively by old men, and was not made by every stool maker, but by only a few individual craftsmen who had the necessary skill. These stools were not used by all old men, but chiefly by wire drawers, medicine-men, and rich men. They were often decorated with chain links, arranged in patterns and hammered into the surface of the seat. These were carried by their owners on a thong or chain slung over the shoulder.

Mũtũrirũ

A length of hollow castor oil stem was cut and kept in many men's huts for use in injecting water or medicines into the wounds of cattle or sheep. A simple flute, also called *mũtũrirũ*, is described below.

p.333
Gĩtatĩ

This was made from the wood of *mũtatĩ*, *mwenyere*, or *mũkũngũngũ*, and consisted of a section of stem about 6in. thick hollowed out like a hollow bamboo. It was used in trapping moles, and a variation of this, which was hollowed out only at one end, was used in trapping rats (for details see Chapter 12). It was hollowed by means of a sword and a knife, as the wood was soft.

Ndiho

This was a mallet made by cutting the branch of a tree that had a thickness of about 4in. and a stem or shoot branching from it at right angles. It was thus a one-piece mallet with flat ends.

Mũtĩ wa Ithanwa

An axe handle was made from *mũiri* wood and was shaped like a short, thick club. At the thick end a hole was bored, first with a red-hot poker, and then with the tang end of the axe head that was to be fitted into the handle. The tang was then firmly driven into the hole.

Thiya (*or Thiia*)

The long-handled chisel used by woodworkers has been described above. The handle was made of hard wood about 4ft long and 2in. in diameter.

Thiya (*or Thiia*)

This second kind of *thiya* was the weighted handle of the spear, or rather "harpoon", used in killing elephants. A fuller account is found in Chapter 12.

Mũtĩ wa Rũhiũ

The handle of a sword or knife was made from the roots of *mũkũrũe*, *mũtũndũ*, or *mũrembu* wood, or from *mũkũrũe* branches. It was carefully (p.334) carved to a suitable shape after the tang was driven through the handle and bent over where it protruded through the handle at the other end. This was a safeguard against the blade's coming loose and leaving the bladeless handle in the user's hand.

Mĩtĩ ya Njora

The sheaths used by the Kikuyu for their swords were made of leather on a framework of wood. This framework consisted of two thin wooden boards, hand-cut from a large piece of stem of *mũgaithu*, *mũnunga*, or *mũtũndũ* wood. The method of making the sheath is described in the section of this chapter dealing with leather work.

Mũtĩ wa Itimũ

The handles of both a fighting and an elder's spear have already been described.

Icengi (*plural Macengi*)

This was the name of the wooden spear used for inter-district fighting by big uninitiated boys of 17 or 18 years of age. They were made from big, well grown, straight *mũnyenye or mũnderendu* trees, which were split so the spears could be cut from solid wood. These wooden spears were about 8ft long, sharpened at both ends, and about 1in. in diameter. So hard were the points that they could be driven through a shield to pierce the man behind it. The *macengi* were kept by boys after initiation until they acquired their iron spears, and even then a man often kept his *icengi* for inter-territorial unit fights, because if he wounded one of the opposite faction with a wooden spear no fine was payable, whereas even a small wound with an iron spear involved a fine of about 30 sheep and goats.

Gĩcengi (*plural Icengi*)

This rough wooden spear was made from a sapling and used in the game of spearing the hoop (see Chapter 15). These were not carefully made and, unlike *macengi* above, they were thrown away after use.

p.335
Mũtĩ wa Ngo

The wooden laths used for the handle and framework of a war shield (*ngo*) were made from *mũrangarĩ* wood, or occasionally from old, mature *mũrembu* wood. The method of making shields is described under "Leather Work".

Itandara

This bark shield used by boys was made from the bark of the following trees: *mũkeũ*, *mũgaa*, or *mũringa*. A large piece of bark about 2ft wide and 3ft long was carefully removed from one of

these trees, and while fresh and damp was laid on the ground, and large stones placed on it so that it would dry out flat. Meanwhile, the boy making the shield pared down a thick stem of *mũrembu* wood until he had made a stick looking like a parring stick, that is, a stick tapering at both ends with a handle in the middle cut from a single piece. This was then attached to the middle of the outer side of the bark by burning holes in the bark with a red hot awl, and then sewing the "handle bar" on with leather thongs. The bark was trimmed to an oval shape like a warrior's shield, and the smooth inner surface of the bark (which was the outer surface of the shield) was decorated with *cenga* (yellow paint made from *gacenga*, or water alga), *mbiro ya nyũngũ ya mbarĩki* (soot from the castor oil cooking pot), *mbiro ya mũhũtĩ* (soot from the wood of the *Erythrina abyssinica* tree), and *ira* powder. The decorative pattern was one chosen by the boy himself and was not any motif in use among the warriors.

Ndome

A light-weight dance shield for the *mũũmbũro* dance was made from the wood of *mũnunga*, *mwatha*, *mwenyere*, or from a big *mũkũngũngũ*. They were most often carved by special craftsmen from whom they were bought with goatskins or other goods, but some boys preferred to carve their own. They were made from one large solid piece of wood with a built-in armhole.

The boys of each territorial unit all had their dance shields decorated in the same way each year, the decoration adopted each year differing from that of the preceding year, unless there had been no initiation of boys in the meantime owing to a taboo forbidding male initiations for a (p.336) year or more. The pattern adopted on the outer side of the shields of a group of boys preparing for initiation was often agreed upon many months in advance, and it was commonly this one that they would subsequently use on their war shields once they were initiated, and until they joined up with the whole major age-group in due course (see Chapter 18).

Boys usually passed their dance shields on to their younger brother when they themselves were initiated, and these brothers usually scraped off the old decoration and repainted the shield with the pattern adopted by their group, but this was not essential, and a boy could use the shield with the pattern of his elder brother. New dance shields were required in a family only if there were several boys preparing for initiation at once and not enough family shields to go round.

Mũhengere

This was a different form of dance shield used for the *kĩbũiya* dance together with the *njagua*. It was a long wooden shield made in a single piece, with a handle carved at the back. It was usually about 8in. wide and 3ft long and was made of the same wood as the *ndome*. Like the *ndome*, it was sometimes decorated on the outer side with the "insignia" of the territorial unit of the boys who were preparing for initiation that year, but often only with a boy's own pattern. Unlike the *ndome*, however it had no decorative motive on the inner aspect, whereas the *ndome* always had the inner aspect decorated with a pattern symbolizing an eye and eye lids.

Ũta

The Kikuyu bow, which was used for fighting by the older men, was made from the wood of the trees called *mũtongu mũirũ wa werũ*, *mũnderendu* and *mũharũ*. The bow staves were simply round-sectioned staves about 3½ft long, tapering at each end, and with a thickness of about 1in. at the centre of the stave. In spite of their apparentiy simple form, most bows were made by specially skilled bow makers, since it was necessary that the bow be properly balanced and evenly tapered,

so that the pull was equal from both ends. Bow strings were made from the sinews of oxen or, occasionally, eland (see Chapter 12).

p.337
Kĩano

An arrow shaft was made either from the wood called *mũgumocano* or *mũnderendu*. A suitable piece was shaved and pared down and a notch cut at one end and a small cup-shaped hollow at the other to receive the tang of the head. Having been fastened to the shaft by inserting the tang into this hollow cup, the arrow head was cemented there by applying first the milky juice of *mũthũũri* and then the gummy sap of the roots of the *ũrirũ* plant. This gum or glue, once hardened, gripped the head so firmly that no one could pull it out. The feathering and poisoning of arrows is dealt with in Chapter 12.

Thuuthi

This was a wooden-headed arrow, the point being made from such wood as *mũhũgũ* or *mũtamaiyũ*. The shaft was made of the stems of sorghum, or *thara* reeds.

Thuuthi

Another type of wooden arrow had a cane shaft and was used for shooting colobus monkeys, which were never shot with iron arrows or with poisoned arrows.

Mĩgũĩ ya Arui

Initiation candidates, during their period of seclusion, were given special arrows in which the shaft and stem were all of a single piece of wood cut from a stem of *mũtamaiyũ*. These arrows were used for ceremonial purposes only (see Chapter 16).

Ndiringũ (*also called Ndiiri*)

This was a special arrow made of *mũrangarĩ* wood for the use of initiation candidates during the period of their novitiate. The stem of the arrow was made of *mũrangarĩ* wood and the head was made of a leather disc through which the point of the arrow shaft was thrust. On to this leather (p.338) disc and round the projecting point was moulded beeswax until there was a ball shaped head of wax completely covering the leather disc. It was used for shooting birds, and might even be used for shooting at girls occasionally!

Thiaka wa Mũrangi

Sometimes a quiver was made from a hollow length of bamboo instead of from leather, and had only a leather base and leather cap.

Njũgũma ya Ndemerero

One type of club much used by the Kikuyu was made from a straight shoot projecting at right angles from a root or from a branch. This was used as the handle of the club, while the head of the club was carved out of a section of the root or branch from which it was growing. Such clubs were made from *mũnderendu*, *mũcarage*, *mũtamaiyũ*, and *mũthithĩi*.

Njũgũma ya Mwatũro

This was a club cut from a solid stem of wood and shaped according to each man's fancy. Most men made their own. They were chiefly made from *mũnderendu* or *mũtamaiyũ* wood. It was taboo

to make a club from *muunjuga-iria* wood because even a light blow from such a club was liable to be fatal.

Thiarĩ (*also called Ndotono*)

This was a special club made from *mũnderendu* wood. A whole sapling was pulled up by the roots and the tap root cut off a little way down. The subsidiary roots were cut off so as to leave hard projecting spikes on the end of the club. The whole was then peeled. It made a kind of Irish club (shillelagh).

Igogo

This was a special club with a blade-shaped head used by some (but not all) boys at an initiation ceremony for throwing over the *mũgumo* (p.339) tree. It was often made by adapting an old axe head that had been discarded.

Mũthuuri

This was a special club with a sharp spike on the end. It was commonly made of *mũgambwa* or *mũcarage* wood. It was a deadly weapon.

Kĩburuti

Bull roarers were not used among the Kikuyu for ceremonial purposes, but were commonly used by boys when scaring off birds from the corn-fields. A bull roarer was usually made of *mũkũgũngũ* or *mũtũndũ* wood. The wood was pared very thin, to about ⅛in. with a knife, and was about 10in. long and 2in. wide, tapering at one end. At the other end a hole was bored and a string attached.

Coro

A wooden horn was sometimes made of *mwatha* wood to take the place of the bongo and kudu war horns that were hard to obtain (see below, under "Horn, Ivory, and Bone"). These wooden horns, carved from *mwatha*, had at the wide end an additional leather sleeve attached. This served to lengthen the "horn" and make it more effective. These "horns" were never blown from the end, but always from a hole set in the side near the end.

Ngongoro

Wooden hand-clappers were used for keeping time in some of the dances in the days of the last *Maina* generation. No man I met had ever seen this type of hand-clapper, but they had heard about them from their fathers.

Mũtũrirũ

A simple "flute" was made by Kikuyu boys from the bark of certain (p.340) shrubs. This bark was peeled off intact like a pipe and then had holes cut in the side, like a sort of penny whistle. *Mũtũrirũ* was also the name for a hollow castor oil stem described in Chapter 7.

Njagua

This was a wooden arm ornament of peculiar shape which was sometimes made by special craftsmen, but which most men and growing boys would make for themselves if they could. It had points or horns on it, and boys would jostle one another with these in play. It was usually made from *mwatha*, *mũkũngũngũ*, *mwenyere*, or *mũnunga* wood. These were white woods that were also light, so that the ornament would not weigh too heavily on the arm.

Mĩtĩ ya Ngingo

These were little flat tongues of *mũngirima* or *mũbĩngũ* wood about 3in. long, and ½in. wide, and ¼in. thick. They were made black by the same process as described for *ndebe* (below), and then bored through with a red-hot awl parallel with the surface of the tongue. They were threaded and used as a necklace.

Ndebe

A round ear ornament that looks rather like a "napkin ring" was made only by specialist woodworkers called *aai a ndebe*, who sold these products for chain and bead ornaments, which they later resold for skins and other goods.

Ndebe were cut from the wood of *mũthithioi*, *mũthuthi*, or *mũngirima*. These were white woods, and when the ornaments had been carved they were blackened by painting with a mixture of the juice of the fruit of the *gakarakũ kairũ*, mixed with the juice of the bark of *mũkowe*, and the juice of the terminal "bud" (*kĩongoro*) of a bunch of bananas. The *ndebe* were then packed in black mud for a few hours to "fix" the colour. After this treatment they were dug out and oiled with castor oil. They then remained shiny black for ever.

p.341
Mũtĩ wa Gũtũ (*also called Kĩringĩ*)

A wooden ear plug of polished *mũkũrũe, mũrembu,* or *mũnunga-mai* was worn by warriors in the lobes of their ears. Each man made his own, and they were not decorated as in North Kikuyu.

Kĩrangi

This was a length of bamboo stem cut off at both ends below one of its natural divisions, so that it was a natural cylindrical container, blocked at one end and open at the other. A cork of wood or of maize cob was fitted at the open end, and this container was used for storing ostrich feathers and other things that might be damaged by rats.

Kĩnya kĩa Mbakĩ

Some men used snuffboxes made from hollowed pieces of wood of such trees as *mũbĩngũ, mũngirima*, *mũthuthi*, and *mũtanga*. They were carved and hollowed out by specialists who used knives and a series of special instruments of varying shapes, all called *thegethi*.

Mũthĩgi

This was the insignia of office used by the council elders, and was made from *thĩgi* (long branches) of either *mũngirima*, or *mũrigi* wood. These were sacrificial woods and the staves were sacred; no one would dare to step over one. These sticks or staves were made as black as ebony by dyeing them with the juice of the terminal bud of a banana bunch mixed with the juice of the bark of the *mũkowe* tree. Then the sticks were put into black mud to "fix" the dye. These staves could be used only by elders who had hosted initiation ceremonies at their own homesteads. *Mũthĩgi* staves made from *mũnderendu* were sometimes made and used for ordinary occasions and for young elders not yet qualified for the proper *mũthĩgi*.

Mũtirima

This was simply a straight stem of almost any wood used as a staff or walking stick by old men. It had no special significance.

p.342
Rũthanju

Light walking sticks and canes were carried by men and women at times. Any suitable wood could be used.

Ndorothi

The special staff used in the circumcision dance was called *ndorothi*, and was usually made from *mũgũcwa* (*Fagera usambarensis*), *mũturangũrũ* (*Vernonia holstii*), or *mũcatha* (*Vernonia lasiopus*) wood. This object will be further described under "Leather Work".

A number of other wooden objects with special names were made and used by the Kikuyu on special occasions, for example *mũcee*, a name for both a staff and a special wand carried in initiation and post-initiation rites (see Chapter 16). These will, however, be mentioned in succeeding chapters. The above list does not pretend to be exhaustive, but only to indicate the main wooden objects made by the Kikuyu.

String, Rope, and Basket Work

Rũrigi (*plural Ndigi*)

String was made from the inner bark of the following plants: *mũkeũ*, *muondwe*, *mũgũtha*, *rũkangarithi*, *mũrinda-ngũrũe*, *mũcingiri*, *mũgumo*, and *mũgio*. It was also made from the fibres of *ndibai*, sometimes called wild sisal.

To make bark string, the whole bark was first peeled from the stem of the plants and the inner bark carefully separated from the outer bark. This process was called *gũtanduura*. The inner bark was made into little bundles and then chewed and frayed into threads. These were twisted into string of whatever thickness was required, by a special process called *kuogotha*. This process has been described adequately by Routledg and needs no further description here, save to point out that he failed to mention that the inner bark was separated from the outer bark before it was chewed.

The bark of certain plants was also used as rough string without being twisted into yarns. These plants were *mũũa*, *mũgere*, *mũgaa*, *mũringa*, *mũrũamba*, *mũcũna*, and *mũtei*.

Mũhĩndo

Rope was made for various purposes, such as tying bunches of sweet potato for carriage from the fields. It was made from the inner bark of certain plants, but the bark for this purpose was not chewed. The best plants were *mũgio*, *mũgũtha*, and *mũrinda-ngũrũe*. Rope was made exclusively by men, while the making of string was women's work, except for the string used for snares and for certain processes connected with beer making (see Chapter 8).

Kĩondo

Every Kikuyu girl learnt how to make a string bag as soon as she was old enough, usually seven to eight years of age. Kikuyu women and girls habitually made these bags as they walked along the path to and from their fields, or when going to the river, or going to look for firewood. So accustomed were they to this form of weaving that they could do it without looking at the work, just as European women do knitting while reading or talking. The method of making string bags has been adequately described and illustrated by Routledge (1910).

Gĩtiti

This was a spirally wound basket, about 1ft in diameter, and with sides about 8in. high. It was used for a variety of purposes, such as giving stall-fed sheep saline earth, and serving cooked potatoes for the men's hut. A *gĩtiti* was made from the roots and creepers of such plants as *mũũgũ*, *mwaritha*, *mũriĩra*, and *rũhurũhuro*. This type of basket was made by specialists, who also made winnowing trays (*itarũrũ*, singular *gĩtarũrũ*) from the same materials, and by the same spiral-wind technique.

Gĩtarũrũ

A winnowing tray; see above under "*Gĩtiti*".

Riigĩ

The hurdle door of a hut has already been described in Chapter 5.

p.344
Kĩgũtha

A sling was made of bark string by small boys. Such slings have been adequately described by Routledge (1910).

Marithiani

A special head ornament was made from string for the use of candidates for initiation by the Ũkabi guild. It was made by a special plaiting process (*gũtuma marithiani*), and the string used had to be made from *ndibai* fibre. The plaiting was done round two stems of *mũrĩira* root. *Marithiani* made for girls were further decorated by having cowrie shells worked into the design.

Kĩondo kĩa Ngũnyi

This was a string bag made to fit the head like a cap and then decorated on the outside with beads made from *ngũnyi* seeds. It was worn by warriors.

Gĩcĩgĩ (*also called Mũiyũrio*)

Sometimes a warrior, instead of having vulture feathers attached to his hair, had them fitted to a string bag made to fit like a cap and called *gĩcĩgĩ*.

Rĩĩndurĩ

This was a knee ornament made by boys by a special plaiting of string and sorghum bark.

Leather Work

In discussing the various objects made from leather, we have to differentiate between objects made of leather with the hair or fur left on, and (p.345) leather from which it had been removed. We have to distinguish, too, between objects that were made from goatskin, sheepskin, oxhide, and the skins of wild animals.

Women's clothes, and also the garment worn by boys during the novitiate, were made from skins of goats and sheep that had been freed of all wool and hair and then thoroughly brayed and turned into thin, soft leather.

In preparing the skin of a ram or a ewe, the skin was pegged out and dried as described in Chapter 7, and then either put away until required or plucked immediately. If it was the skin of an animal that had been killed for sacrifice, it had to be plucked at once and could not be stored until this had been done, but the skin of a non-sacrificial animal could be stored unplucked and left until required.

During the plucking process (*kũhunyũra*), the outer layer of skin was pulled off with the hair in little bits. When the whole skin had been plucked thus by hand, it was scraped (*kũhara*) with a knife on the upper surface. Then the skin was rubbed between the hands and rumpled and rubbed until it became quite soft. This process (*gũtanduka*) was aided by the use of a little mutton fat. The leather so treated became soft and supple and was set aside until there were enough skins so treated to make the garment required.

Goat skins were treated in a slightly different manner, for they could not be plucked like sheep skins. The hair and the outer layer of the skin under the hair had to be scraped off with a special scraper (*gathanwa ka njũa*), described earlier.

After being scraped, a goat skin had to be further treated before it could be rubbed soft. For this, the skin was laid on the ground and green leaves of the *mũtũndũ* tree were placed all over it. It was then rolled up with these leaves and left for about 24 hours. This softened the skin considerably so that it could be rubbed and treated like a sheep skin. Sometimes green castor oil leaves were used instead of *mũtũndũ* leaves.

When enough skins had been prepared in this manner, they were made into garments as described below.

Articles made of Leather

Nguo ya Ngoro (*also called Nguoya Maribĩ—see figure below*)

This was a woman's skin cloak made from goat skins. A big woman's cloak would require four goat skins, a small woman's cloak three. The (p.346) cutting of the skins and fitting together of the pieces to make a cloak was far from a simple process, and these cloaks were therefore always cut by skilled male cutters. To cut three skins to make a small cloak, two skins were cut in half down the line of the back from the middle of the neck the tail, while the other skin was cut into three strips, one being narrow and extending to about 5in. on either side of the middle line The middle strip of this skin and the two halves of the first skin were all faced in the same direction, that is, with the neck end at what would be the foot end of the completed garment. Then the two side pieces of the skin that were cut into three were sewn along the top of the other three bits of skin and at right angles to them. The two halves of the third skin were sewn on top of these.

p.347

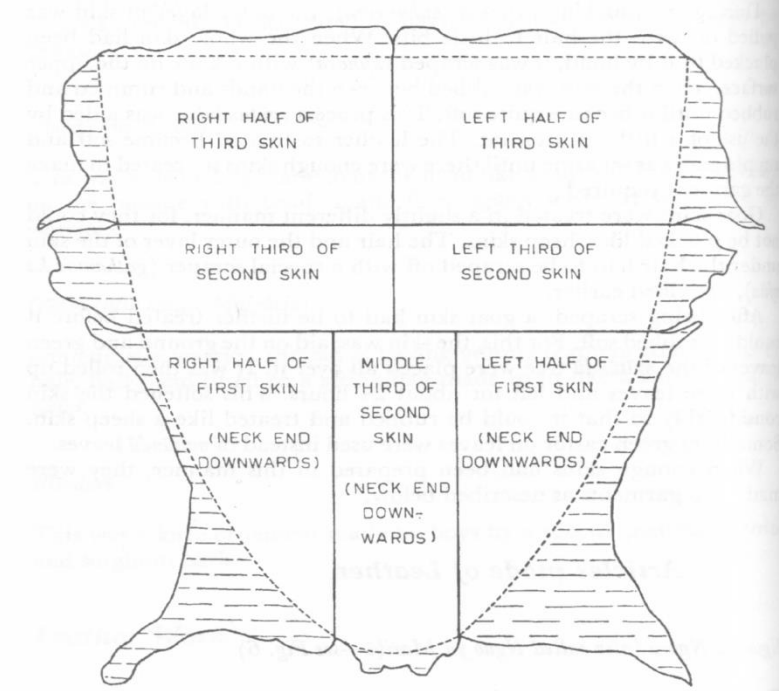
RIGHT HALF OF THIRD SKIN
LEFT HALF OF THIRD SKIN
RIGHT THIRD OF SECOND SKIN
LEFT THIRD OF SECOND SKIN
RIGHT HALF OF FIRST SKIN
(NECK END DOWNWARDS)
MIDDLE THIRD OF SECOND SKIN
(NECK END DOWN-WARDS)
LEFT HALF OF FIRST SKIN
(NECK END DOWNWARDS)

Fig. 6. The correct method of cutting three sheep skins to make a woman's cloak.

This done, and all the seams having been sewn, the whole piece was pegged out on the ground and cut to the required shape for a cloak. The skin was then well oiled and greased, and anointed with castor oil and red ochre, after which it was ready for use.

The cloaks of young married women who had not yet had a second child and of unmarried girls, had all the seams decorated with beads, which were sewn on close together or wide apart according to how many were available. A beaded seam, therefore, indicated that the wearer was a girl, or a young married woman.

The bits of leather that were cut off when trimming a cloak to the correct shape were always kept by the woman for patches.

At the two top corners of the garment reinforced "buttonholes" were made for fastening the cloak. Four little circles of skin were cut out and two of these were sewn on to each corner, one on the outside and one on the inside. Then a small circular hole was cut through the treble thickness of leather thus formed, and a thin soft piece of leather "tape" was threaded through these two holes and tied. The tied corner was always worn on the right shoulder. Such a button hole was called *kĩrica*.

Cloaks were always cut to fit the woman they were made for, the correct length being from her shoulder to her ankle. When walking, the garment was usually hitched up at the waist a little, and was usually discarded altogether when she was working in the fields or grinding

Mũthuru

This was the woman's skirt. Unlike the cloak, it was never cut by men, but skilled women cutters, and it was never made from goat skin, but only from sheep skin. A skirt required two skins. The first skin was cut into a rough square by trimming away both sides, and the second was cut in half. The three pieces were then seamed together with the neck ends all facing the part to be the lower end of the garment and with the square piece in the middle. Then the sewn skins were pegged out and cut to the required shape for a skirt, which depended upon whether it was for a married woman or an unmarried girl. A married woman's skirt did not reach below the knees. The seams of the skirt of a girl or young woman were decorated with beads, while those of a married woman with more than one child were not. If a garment had to be patched, however, the seam round the patch was always decorated with beads, so that it would be less unsightly. At the left upper corner a small bit of leather was sewn on in such a way as to form a loop, and at (p.348) the right corner a long, soft "tape" of leather was sewn, long enough to go round the woman's waist once and still

leave a piece long enough to tie. When putting on her skirt, a woman passed this tape round her waist once and then put it through the loop and tied it.

Mwengũ

This was the pubic apron worn by women and girls. It was made from odd bits of left over leather, or commonly from the untorn parts of an old cloak or skirt. A woman's *mwengũ* was short, but an unmarried girl's pubic apron had long swallow tails to match the swallow tails of her skirt. When worn with a skirt the pubic apron was never tied or fastened in any way except by tucking it under the skirt and skirt belt.

Most women and initiated girls had two sets of garments, one for working in the fields and one for festive occasions. Cloaks usually lasted from two to two and a half years, but skirts, which had much harder wear, seldom lasted more than a year. A young, uninitiated girl (*kĩrĩgũ*) wore only a cloak and a pubic apron, never a skirt, while very young girls had a pubic apron and nothing else. In both these cases, the pubic apron had a tape attached to it for tying round the wearer's waist.

Gĩcoco

This was a special beaded girls' pubic apron and is described under "Bead Work".

Nguo ya Gĩthii (*Men's Large Cloak*)

Men's garments were made differently from those of women, and were mostly made of leather with the hair left on; thus they were brayed softened only on the inner surface. Men wore a single garment in the form of a large cloak, and this was called *nguo ya gĩthii*. It was always more or less rectangular in shape and made from calf, sheep, or goat skins or from the skins of reedbuck or impala. The number of skins required depended on the size of the skins and of the garment to be made. Young men wore only short cloaks reaching about halfway between the waist and knee, while those of married men reached below the knee. An (p.349) un-married man's cloak, therefore, seldom needed more than three skins, while an elder's cloak needed four, five, or even six.

Rich elders also had cloaks made from the furs of such animals as hyrax monkey, black serval cat, Thompson's gazelle, or dik-dik. Cloaks of wild animal skin could not be worn by unmarried men. Every man's cloak had a strip of leather sewn along its upper edge to reinforce it. This process was called *gũtiriha*. At the two upper corners a leather tape was attached about 5in. from the end of the skin and this was tied over the right shoulder when the skin was being worn.

Nguo ya Maribĩ

Senior elders often had, in addition to their *nguo ya gĩthii*, a second garment made of soft, pliable leather like that used for women's cloaks, but made in the form of a rough rectangle from six skins, each squared off at the edges. The outer edges of this garment were often clipped to make a fringe.

This elder's garment was rubbed with the juice of the plant called *kĩgagatio*, which was said to prevent it getting dirty easily.

Nguo ya Kiumĩri

This was a garment made exactly like a woman's cloak as already described, and it was made new for every boy and girl to wear during the period between initiation and the ceremony of *gũthiga*, when novices were admitted to adulthood. In the case of a girl initiate, the garment subsequently became her first *nguo ya ngoro*, while in the case of a boy, his mother took the cloak and used it

herself when he became a warrior. It had two eyelet holes at waist level so that it could be tied at the waist.

Rerai

Cotton cloth was sometimes obtained from the Akamba by trade, and this was made into a special ornament for use in certain dances. A piece of cloth about 2ft square had a hole cut in the middle, and round this hole, which was big enough to go over the head, a leather collar was stitched.

p.350
Mũthere

This was a warrior's garment worn on the buttocks when going to war. It was made from the skin of a black ram and had the hair left on. It was not shield shaped, but like a tail about 8in. wide.

Cũrũri

Men dancing the *ngurũ* dance (see Chapter 11) wore a shield-shaped leather garment to cover their buttocks. This was made, from the skin of a goat or a ram which had been plucked and made into soft, pliable leather like that used for women's clothing. It was cut in a single piece from one skin and had two leather thongs attached to the upper end about 4in. from the top on either side. These were tied round the waist. The flap at the top was turned outwards.

Kamwengũ

Men dancing the *ngurũ* dance also made a small pubic apron on the pattern of that used by women, and wore this over the genitalia. Both the *cũrũri* and the *kamwengũ* used by men for the *ngurũ* dance were decorated with beads sewn on in various patterns. This was done by girl friends of the warriors, and anthropomorphic designs were common.

Gĩthere

This was a garment worn over the buttocks by young men in connection with certain of their dances. It was made of calf or goat skin with the hair left on. It was cut to the same pattern as the *cũrũri*, but it had two eyelets at the corners instead of two leather thongs, and a single thong was passed through these two eyelets and tied round the waist as a belt. The *gĩthere* was somewhat bigger than a *cũrũri*.

Kĩrũũmi

For the *kĩbũiya* dance, the proper garment to wear over the buttocks was the skin of a serval cat or a leopard. This was called *kĩrũũmi*, the (p.351) Kikuyu word for a serval cat, and is well illustrated in Routledge's book (1910).

Mbithe

This was a garment worn over the buttocks by boys dancing the *kĩbũiya* dance if they could not get hold of a serval cat skin, which was the correct thing to wear. It was made of the skin of a white, or black and white goat with the hair left on.

Ngaranda

A soft leather cap to wear over the hair was made by warriors from the stomach of an ox or from the skin of a new-born lamb that had died. These have been well illustrated in Routledge's book.

Kĩratũ

This was a sandal made from oxhide or buffalo hide. Sandals were extensively used, and every warrior had a pair of them for use when going on a raid where there were no paths. Elders also had them for use when going on a journey, but not for everyday use, and women had them only if they were in the habit of going on trading expeditions into Maasai country (see Chapter 13).

Ngoi

This was the skin "cradle" made for carrying a baby on a woman's back, or at her breast. It was normally made from the skin of a young ram or goat killed at the time of the baby's birth, and might be made either with or without the hair of the skin left on. The *ngoi* could be made from the skin of an animal other than that slaughtered at the child's birth, and any *ngoi* could be used—if it lasted—for a second child. The skin of the red forest duiker (*ngunũ*) could also be used for this purpose, but no other wild animal's skin. No skin from an animal having died a natural death could be used in any circumstances for a *ngoi*. A skin suitable for this purpose was called *karũũa ka maĩga*, which means a skin free from any ritual uncleanness.

p.352
To make the *ngoi*, the skin of the hind legs was cut short and an eyelet was made in the extremity of each leg so that the leg skin could be fastened round the mother's waist. The foreleg skins were cut off and a strap fixed from one upper corner to the other. This strap was normally put over the mother's forehead. The neck of the skin was folded back as a kind of collar which could be turned up to keep the sun or rain off the baby's head.

Mondo

A skin satchel was made by elders and carried slung over the shoulder. It was used to carry odds and ends. The best skin for making a *mondo* was that of the red forest duiker, which was strong and lasted a long time. To make a *mondo*, the skin was folded in half, and the two thicknesses were cut into a trapezium with the top and bottom parallel, and the longer side at the bottom. The two sides of the trapezium were then firmly stitched with a leather thong or with sinew. About 3in. from the top on either side a leather carrying strap was attached. The part of the bag projecting beyond this strap was turned over like the flap of an envelope.

Ndarũa

Every adult Kikuyu bed had a sleeping mat made from the hide of an ox, a barren cow, or, occasionally, an eland (see Chapter 12). The skin was cut into a large oval after it had been dried, and the hairy side was covered in ash and water and scraped with a potsherd (not with a knife), until all the hair was removed. The side where the hair had been was placed upwards on the bed as the surface to be slept on. The skins of animals that had died a natural death or of those that had been killed because of the bearing of twins could not be used in a woman's hut.

Mũkwa wa Ngũ

The leather strap used for carrying loads of firewood, thatching grass etc. was made from the skin of an ox or barren cow eaten at a meat feast, or occasionally from eland hide (see Chapter 12). This was due to the fact that such animals had been jointly bought by five or six people, and by cutting up the skin into strips for making thongs, each person (p.353) got a share of the skin. For this the skin was cut wet and the strips cut off in a spiral, round and round the skin. This spiral strip was cut about 2in. wide, and was cut into lengths of about 14—18ft. These were first washed in cold water to remove the blood adhering to the inner surface, then a large pot of water was boiled and taken off the fire, and the strips were dipped into the boiling water for a few minutes,

after which all the hair could be easily scraped off. Alternatively, the skin strips would be bound up with *mũtũndũ* or *mwarĩki* leaves and hung up in the hut for 48 hours, by which time hair would start to slip and could all be scraped off.

The hair having been removed by one or other of the above processes, the strip of skin was pegged out on the ground for an hour or two, but before it was quite dry it was taken up and hung over the fork of a tree and treated as follows. A stick about 18in. long and 1in. in diameter was split and the thong passed through the split. The stick was then gripped at both ends and dragged the full length of the thong. By this process the stick acted as a "scraper and brayer" in one, and after about five such treatments the thong began to get supple. It was then anointed with beef or mutton fat and again treated in the same way a number of times, and in the end it became beautifully soft. The final preparation of the strap consisted of cutting an eyelet at one end and paring the last foot of the other end down to a tapering point. The strap was then ready for use. A strap of this sort about 16ft long was valued at one goat skin.

Rũkwaro

The leather strap used by men for various purposes such as putting up hives was made in the same way but was much narrower—only ½in. wide usually—and was also usually much longer, often 25 or 30ft. Strips of leather strap made in the same way were used for a great variety of purposes, such as handles for baskets, milk gourds, and bags. If aardvark hide was available, which it rarely was, its skin was much valued for these straps, as it was so strong that nothing could break it.

Mũkwa wa Mĩrĩyo

This was a thin leather strap made in the way described above, but cut from an ox's belly. It was used for tying up sweet potato vines and other plants used as stock feed.

p.354
Mũkwa wa Ndegwa

The leather collar used for oxen was also made from the strip of skin from the belly of an ox or cow, and these collars were made by a curious form of plaiting (*kũrama*). Three strips were laid on top of each other, the lowest of the three pierced, and both the other two drawn through the hole, one after the other. The strip that had now become the lower was then pierced and the other two drawn through, and so on until a collar of treble straps had been made of about 2½ft.

Gĩthuno

An anklet called *gĩthuno* was made from a piece of leather.

Gĩthitũ

Many elders were seen wearing an ornament on the wrist made of thin leather tape wound round and round a central core. This central core consisted of little twigs of *mũkenia*, *kĩrago gĩa kĩanda*, *kĩrago kĩa rũgongo*, *mũimba-igũrũ*, and *mũthakwa* together with some honey and *ira* powder. It was not really an ornament at all, but a charm to protect the wearer's cattle and his other possessions. It was not made by a medicine-man but it was put on with a special ceremony.

Ndoho ya Njora

This was the ribbed leather belt which was used to fasten on the sword and sheath of a Kikuyu warrior or elder. To make it required great skill, and only special craftsmen knew how to do it. These belts were always made from the strip of hide between the anus and the scrotum of an ox,

this strip being called the *ngĩra*. This was dipped in boiling water and the hair removed, after which it was stored by its owner until he needed it to be made up into a sword belt. Then he took the dry bit of rawhide to the special craftsman, along with a necklace of beads, a bit of iron, or a second strip to be given as a fee for making up his belt.

The craftsman first soaked the skin for a day or two and then rubbed it soft (*gũtanduka*) between his hands, after which he laid the damp strip on a wooden board and set to work to make the ribs of the belt. This pinching process was called *kũrũma mĩrũmo ya ndoho*. The tools used were (p.355) called *tũmĩtĩ twa kũrũma ndoho,* and were made of hard wood with ends like screwdrivers. They were normally about 4in. long. Holding one of these between the thumb and finger of each hand, he proceeded to pinch the leather between the two sticks and gradually made a raised ridge from one end of the strip to the other. He repeated the process, making about eight parallel ribs down the length of the strip of leather. Then he allowed the leather to dry, watching it all the time, and re-pinching it if it seemed that the ribs were sagging. Once dried in this way, the ribs became permanent. The belt was then suitably trimmed and an eyelet made at each end. Into one eyelet a soft leather thong was fastened which would pass round the waist and through the other eyelet to gird on the belt.

Njora (*Fig. 7*)

Sword sheaths were made by the same craftsmen who made sword belts. The person who wanted the sheath made, supplied the craftsman with a piece of oxhide from the side of an ox near the stomach and two roughly shaped pieces of wood to make the frame of the sheath. These were all handed over to the specialist, together with a fee of a piece of iron, the skin of a goat, or a string of beads. The sword for which the sheath was to be made was also taken so that it could be fitted properly.

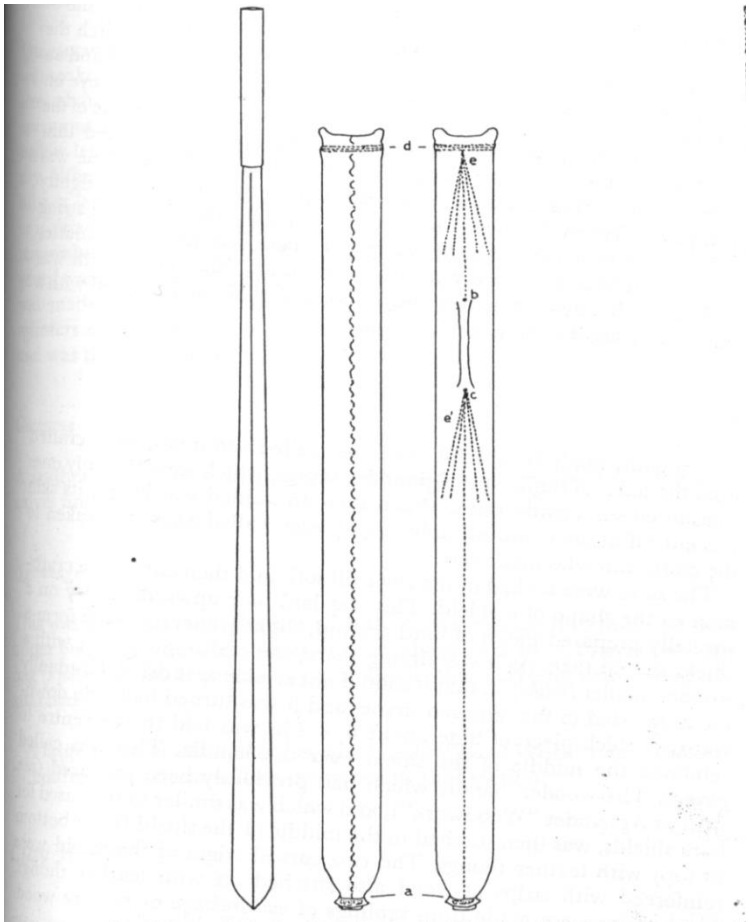

Fig. 7. A sword and the method of making the sheath. (a) String tied round ends of wood beneath metal ring. (b, c) Holes through both pieces of wood. (d) String wound round sheath three times. (e, e′) Decorative pieces of string beneath skin.

The craftsman first set to work to pare down the two bits of wood to the same size and shape. They were roughly sword-shaped and had to be about a ¼in. wider than the widest part of the sword, and about ⅛in. thick. At the bottom ends they were tapered with a slight curve, and at the top end each piece was trimmed to the shape shown in the figure below, that is, so as to have a projecting horn at each corner. This was called *kweha njora* (literally, to knock out the front teeth of the sheath). This done, the foundation of the traditional pattern which every sheath had to have was laid. Thin twisted string was tied firmly round the bottom ends of these two bits of wood (a), so that they were held together to make the basic framework of the sheath. This string was then brought up the middle line of the piece of wood forming one side of the frame until it was about 6in. from the top, where it was passed through the end of a little strip of leather ⅜in. wide and 2-2½in. long. The string was then passed through a small hole pierced through the middle line of both pieces of wood (b), up the middle line of the piece of wood on the other side of the frame for 2in., then through both boards (c), and back to the first side, where it passed through the other end of the little strip of leather. This little strip of leather, which was the foundation of the (p.356) *riitho* (the eye) of the sheath, or the place through which the wearer's belt would pass, was thus fixed in its correct position. The string was then brought up almost to the top of the sheath (d), wound round it three (p.357) times, and knotted securely. From the knot where it was tied, and on the side of the sheath where the eye had been fixed, four little bits of string radiated. Four more bits of string were fixed so that they radiated from the lower end of the eye.

The skin was taken from the water where it had been soaking and the boards were laid on it, decoration side downwards. The skin was then cut so that, when drawn tightly, it just joined along the middle line of other side of the framework. The craftsman proceeded to stitch the skin together along the middle line, using twisted sinew as thread and an awl to make the holes. When he reached a point level with the eye on the other side, he turned the sheath over, cut the skin on either side of the strip of skin which was the foundation of the eyelet, and sewed this. Then he continued sewing along the middle line until the whole was finished. The string decoration pressed a pattern through the tightly drawn skin. When the sword was put into the sheath it cut the string where it was passed through the two bits of wood, but this did not matter as the whole was now firmly held by the

sheath skin. The sheath was dyed red with a dye made from the roots of *gakarakũ kairũ* crushed with a little water, sugar-cane juice, and soda.

Ngo

War shields, made by special craftsmen called *aati a ngo*, were crafted from the hides of buffalo or of giant forest pigs, which were the only ones considered sufficiently thick. When such an animal was killed, its skin was cut off at once into suitably sized pieces, called *ndari*, and taken to the craftsman who made shields.

The skins were soaked in the river till soft, and then cut by the craftsman to the shape of a shield. This was laid hair upwards to dry on a specially prepared patch of hard ground, slightly curved to the form a shield should take. As it was drying there, the craftsman beat it with a wooden mallet (*ndiho*) so that it should not crinkle as it dried. Gradually the hide dried to the required shape, and it was turned hair side downward. A thick piece of hide about 6 x 4in. was laid in the centre to reinforce the middle of the shield over the handle. This was called *gĩcengo*. The wooden handle which had previously been prepared (*Mĩtĩ ya Ngo* under "Woodwork"), and which was similar to that used for bark shields, was then stitched to the middle of the shield (from bottom to top) with leather thongs. The two curved edges of the shield were reinforced with strips of wood also stitched on with leather thongs. These strips were made from saplings of *mũkarakinga* or *mũrũrũe* wood. (p.358). The shield was then ready to have the hair scrapped off and the decorative pattern of the age-group of its owner painted on.

Thiaka

Quivers were made by special craftsmen from oxhide. A piece of oxhide was soaked and sewn over a round sectioned block of wood of suitable size, about 2½ft long and 4in. in diameter. When it had been thus sewn and shaped, the wood was withdrawn before the skin dried, the hollow leather tube was filled up with tightly packed earth and put to dry. When dry, the earth was removed and a bottom was fixed to the tube of leather by drying on it a cap of wet rawhide, which contracted as it dried and became immovable. The upper end of the quiver had a removable cap made of leather as follows. First a piece of thick broken gourd was cut to the exact size of the top of the tube, and a leather collar was made and tacked on to the gourd disc with "nails" made from splinters of bamboo. The quiver was provided with a carrying strap, and was then complete.

Gathuma

A leather funnel was often made and used to give milk to orphaned calves and kids.

Nganangũ

This was a special bit of leather with the lower end cut into tails and the upper end pierced for an eyelet. Two of these were fixed to every string bag (*kĩondo*) to make places to which the leather carrying strap could be attached.

A large number of objects described under "Bead Work" had a leather foundation, but these will be described in that section.

Clay Work

Clay was used by the Kikuyu for making cooking pots, the nozzles of (p.359) bellows , the furnance used by smiths, "dolls" used in certain dances, and small, unbaked pots used in some ceremonies.

Cooking pots (*nyũngũ*) were made as follows. Clay (*rĩũmba* or *mbiyũ*) was dug from certain valleys, and the women who made pots dug it themselves. They were helped by any woman who wanted to learn how to make pots, but these "apprentice" women did not pay any fees to learn the craft. The Kikuyu south of the Chania did not mix their clay with micaceous sand as did the Kikuyu north of the Chania, but the clay they used was, in fact, slightly gritty.

The method of Kikuyu pot making has been so adequately described by Routledge (1910), that I shall give only a brief description. The first part of the pot to be made was the neck. To this were added the handles or lugs, called *matũ* (ears) in the case of small pots, and *nyondo* (breasts) in the case of big pots. The lower part of the neck was kept damp while the upper part dried in the sun. The neck was then turned over and stood on its rim, while the body of the pot was built up slowly and finished off at the rounded base. The necks of Kikuyu pots were decorated by rolling string over them to give a corded effect, and some women also put their own special potters' mark on the pots they made. The pots were first sun-dried and then baked in an open fire.

Articles made of Clay

Njuuri

A small pot with an open neck and vertical lugs was used for cooking soup and rendering down fat. A very small one was called *gacuuri*.

Nyũngũ ya Gĩteng'ũ (*also called Ndeng'ũ*)

This was a big, open mouthed pot used for cooking *irio* (the daily meal of maize, beans, etc). and gruel.

Nyũngũ ya Ũcũrũ (*also called Nyũngũ ya Nyama*)

This was a big, tall pot with a wide mouth used only for gruel and for meat.

p.360
Ndigithũ

A narrow-necked, narrow-mouthed pot was used for storing water.

Rũthiri

A pitcher of bulbous shape with a narrow neck was used for storing various liquids.

Gatigithũ

A small, narrow-necked pot was used only for storing fat.

Ngerũa

The clay nozzles used by smiths to link the bellows to the furnace have already been described. They were made by the smiths themselves. They built up the clay to the required shape and did not mould it on a piece of wood, as might be expected.

Nyũngũ cia Thenge

In connection with removing the curse resulting from the oath swearing ceremony of *kũringa thenge* (to strike a he-goat—see Chapter 23), the elders made little unbaked clay pots called *nyũngũ cia thenge* (he-goat's cooking pots).

Nyũngũ ya Aturi (*also called Riiko rĩa Aturi*)

This was the smith's furnace made of clay, which we have already described.

Mwana (*literally, a Child*)

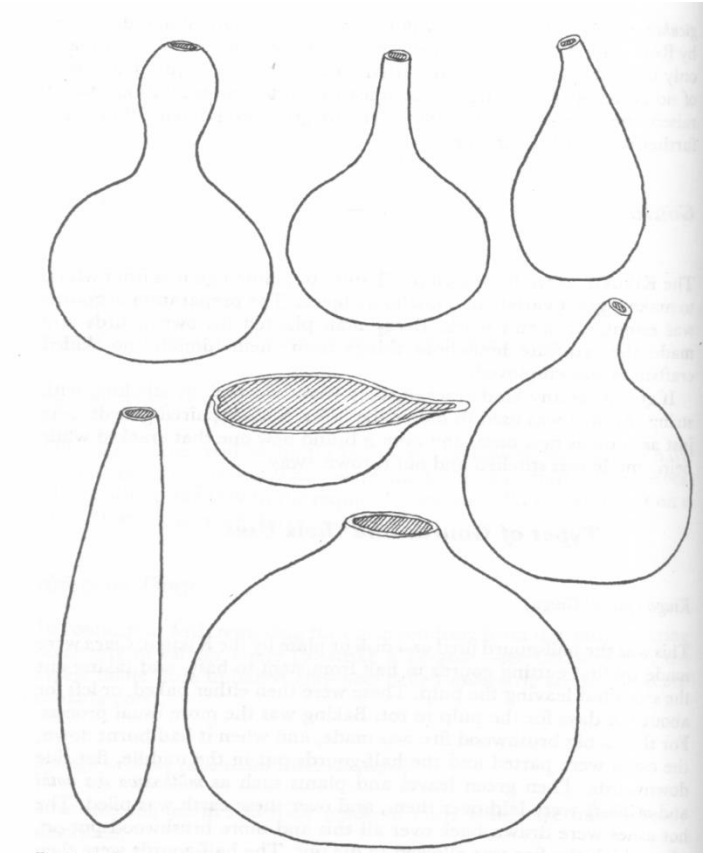

Fig. 8. Various types of gourds.

In connection with the *mũgoiyo* dance, and sometimes also with the (p.361) *gĩcukia*, men would mould clay dolls such as those figured and described by Routledge as "images". They were not baked, and were often made only of river clay (*ndoro*), rather than potters' clay (*rĩũmba*). They were of no ceremonial or religious significance, but their exhibition always raised the rest of the dancing party to great excitement. They are further discussed in Chapter 11.

Gourds

The Kikuyu, as we have seen in Chapter 6, planted gourds from which to make a great variety of household objects. The preparation of gourds was essentially men's work. Every man planted his own gourds and made the requisite household things from them himself; no skilled craftsman was employed.

If gourds of any kind cracked, they were "riveted" by stitching with string. An awl was used to pierce the holes. Such repaired gourds were just as good as new ones, and even a brand new one that cracked while being made was stitched and not thrown away.

Types of Gourds and their Uses

Kiuga (*plural Ciuga*)

This was the half-gourd used as a dish or plate by the Kikuyu. *Ciuga* were made by first cutting gourds in half from stem to base, and taking out the seeds but leaving the pulp. These were then either baked, or left for about ten days for the pulp to rot. Baking was the more usual process. For this, a big brushwood fire was made, and when it had burnt down, the ashes were parted and the half-gourds put in the middle, flat side downwards. Then green leaves and plants such as *mũthakwa wa aathi* and *mũtũndũ* were laid over them, and over these earth was piled. The hot ashes were drawn back over all this and more brushwood put on, after which the fire was allowed to die out. The half-gourds were then removed, the inner pulp scraped out with a little bit of wood, and the half-gourds put in a shady place to dry. Before they were quite dry, the outer surface was scraped with a stick to remove the surface "skin", after which they were ready for use.

p.363
Kĩihũri

A small half-gourd treated as above was used as a ladle and serving spoon.

Ndua

This was the very big type of gourd used for brewing beer. The top of the neck was cut off and then it was baked in a hole in the ground in a manner similar to that described for a *kiuga*. When well cooked and cool, the man preparing it put his whole arm into it, and cleaned out the inside pulp with his hand. Then the *ndua* was taken to the river, washed out, and put to dry, after which it was ready for use.

Gĩtumbĩ

This was another big gourd used for beer.

Kĩnya

This large gourd was used for holding water, gruel, or beer. It had a wide base shoulders, but a narrow neck. It was treated like the *ndua*, but instead of the hand being inserted, the inside was cleaned out with the special tool called *rũego*. A small *kĩnya* would be called a *kanya*, but the phrase *kĩnya kĩa mbakĩ* (*kĩnya* for tobacco or snuff) was used for any gourd used as a snuff box, or container for tobacco. Even a snuff box made of wood or horn was referred to thus.

Nyanja and Mbithi

These were also gourds with wide "bodies" and narrow necks; they were treated like those described above.

Gĩkũmba

This was a gourd that grew with a narrow neck which then bulged again.

p.364
Mũcema, Mbũthũ, Kĩnandũ, Kĩnya kĩa Mbakĩ, and Gĩtete

These were varieties of bottle-shaped gourds with a long tapering neck and no shoulder. They were baked like *ndua*, or if small, they were boiled, cleaned out with a *rũego*, and scraped to remove the outer skin.

Ndahi

This was a small gourd cup made from cutting off the lower half of a *mbũthũ* (above). It was used for beer drinking.

Mbũthũ cia Ngingo (*also called Mũmbũthũ*)

This was a gourd necklace. The tops of the long bottle-shaped gourds, when cut off, were kept and pierced horizontally with a red hot awl. These were then threaded to make necklaces for girls and young men.

Gĩcandĩ

The Kikuyu picture rattle, made from a gourd, was called *gĩcandĩ*.

Bead Work

Jewellery and Ornaments

Apart from the various ornaments that have already been listed in connection with ironwork, wire drawing, leather work, and basket work, the following were made and used by the Kikuyu.

Kĩnyata

This was a leather collar decorated with fine bead work and worn by men and girls alike. The number of rows of beads and their colour varied considerably with individual taste. See Routledge for illustration (1910).

p.365
Ikenye (*plural Makenye*, *diminutive Gakenye*, *plural Tũkenye*)

This was a white disc made from certain sea shells that were acquired by trade with the Akamba, who obtained them from the coast. Girls and men wore these discs attached as pendants from the *kĩnyata* collars. Some warriors made them from ostrich egg-shells. *Makenye* were also small disc beads made from ostrich egg-shell and worn as necklaces by uninitiated boys when dancing, if they could get them, but these were rare, as there were no ostriches in Kikuyu country.

Itumbĩ rĩa Nyaga

Any person who could get hold of a complete ostrich egg would have a hole bored in it at both ends and string it on to a leather thong to use as an ornament held in the hand while dancing certain dances (see Chapter 11).

Njaguana

This was identical to the *kĩnyata* collar, but much smaller and worn on the arm.

Ndarĩtũ

This was like a *kĩnyata* but was worn on the ankle by warriors only. If any boy was seen with one, he would be severely beaten and have it taken from him.

Mũnyoro

This was a leather belt worn by warriors and decorated with two parallel rows of beads running round the belt. The upper row was usually of white beads only, and the second row of red beads only. Below this was another row of beads, each bead having between it and the next a length of iron chain hanging as a pendant for about 2-4in., according to taste. Sometimes blue and white beads were used instead of red and white for the two upper rows, but the row of beads that interspersed with the chain had to be white according to age-long custom. This ornament is well illustrated in Routledge.

Mũgathĩ wa Itina

This was a simple string of beads worn round the waist by warriors.

Gĩcoco

This was a girl's pubic apron worn for its ornamental effect instead of the ordinary garment called *mwengũ* (see under "Leather Work"). It was made of a rectangular piece of soft leather decorated with beads and with a fringe made of little lengths of beaded string ending in the hooves of duiker, dik-dik, and red forest duiker. Sometimes cowrie shells were sewn on instead of beads.

Ciũma cia Itina

This was a girl's bead belt made of four or six strings of blue and white beads. These were not sewn on leather, but were kept in correct position as a belt by their division into sections by strips of hard leather made from rhino or buffalo hides. The beads next to the leather strips on either side were always white.

Ndoho ya Ngũnyi

Boys made a bead belt like the girls' *ciũma cia itina*, but they used black beads made of *ngũnyi* seeds.

Ciũma cia Mũtwe

This was a girl's head ornament made of about ten rows of beads, each bead string being fixed at each end to a leather strip. From the lowest line of beads, a fringe or iron chain was suspended, and on the ends of these chains were little white discs of sea shells called *tũkenye*, which were obtained by trade with the Akamba. The South Kikuyu people did not (p.367) include strings of beads in the fringe as shown in Routledge's illustration, but otherwise the South Kikuyu ornament was like that illustrated by him.

Ngitatĩ

This was a woman's waist belt made of leather with three rows of cowrie shells sewn on to it. The cowrie shells were called *ngũgũtũ*, and were obtained by barter from the Akamba. These belts were worn by girls, but they did not discard them when they married, as they did so many other ornaments.

Mũtotia wa Aanake (*also called Maitai*)

This was a leather belt with cowrie shells sewn on it at intervals of about 4in., the intervals being decorated with a double row of beads. This ornament was worn by warriors over one shoulder and under the other.

Mũtotia wa Airĩtu

This was similar to the men's *mũtotia*, but the cowrie shells were put on end to end, touching each other, and with no bead intervals.

Maitai

Another ornament, also called *maitai*, was a waist belt worn by girls. It had three rows of beads, above and below which was a row of cowrie shells, the lower row being pendant, but the upper row sewn tightly to the belt.

Gĩthioro

This was a neck ornament worn by warriors made of *ngũnyi* seed beads (the black seeds of the *mũkũnyi* plant). When a man had threaded about 10 yds of these seeds, they were wound round and round his neck, passing through two leather thongs to keep them separated. This made a wide (p.368) collar of concentric strands of beads, almost covering the wearer's shoulders, and sometimes reaching down to the wearer's chest.

Mũgathĩ wa Ngũnyi

Boys also made ordinary necklaces of *ngũnyi* seeds to wear round their necks, but not in the form of a *gĩthioro*.

Hũtĩi

These were the bright red seeds of the *mũhũtĩi* tree and were used both for a necklace called *hũtĩ*, and to attach to the hair. Only warriors used them in these forms and only for the *ngurũ* dance, but boys used them as anklets for the *ngũcũ* dance.

Nguurua

A withy neckband was made from the stem of *mũkuurua*, *mũthũrũrĩga*, *mũthandĩka*, or *mũtei*, and worn by uninitiated boys for certain pre-initiation dances.

Irago

This was a necklace made from the roots of the *kĩrago* plant, which were like small tubers and made excellent beads, much favoured because of their sweet scent.

Kĩbatĩ

This was a neck ornament worn by boys for the *mũũmbũro* dance. It is figured and described by Routledge as *kibandi*.

Mang'oyo

This was a necklace, each bead of which was made from the leaves of (p.369) *mũrĩrĩcua*. This ornament is figured by Routledge (1910), but he gives the name "*mangoio*" to another ornament.

Thira

This was a waist ornament made and used by boys for the pre-initiation dance. It was made on a leather base from which a number of strings were hung, each string of the fringe being threaded with grass stems called, *thage*. At the end of each *thage* was fastened a seed of the wild banana (*ngobo*).

Coco (*also called Kĩbatĩ gĩa Coco*)

This was an ornament worn by girls immediately after the operation of clitoridectomy. It was made of the roots and stems of a sweet smelling plant called *coco*, each stem being bound round with a piece of string.

Kĩondo kĩa Ngũnyi

This was a string bag made to fit the head like a cap and then decorated on the outside with beads made from *mũkũnyi* seeds. It was worn by warriors.

Maruku

These were anklets made from the black fur of the colobus monkey, with just a little bit of the white fur on the ends. They were worn by warriors and by boys getting ready for initiation.

Mang'ang'ũ

These were wrist and arm ornaments made from colobus monkey fur for boys in pre-initiation ceremonies. They were never worn by men. The *mang'ang'ũ* of colobus skin worn on the arms by boys for certain dances were later removed and fastened to a staff called *ndorothi*, which was carried by them in other dances.

p.370
Maanjarai

These were ornaments made of the long, white fur of the colobus monkey and worn by warriors below the knees. No boy could use them.

Makenyũa

These were similar to *maanjarai*, but worn above the knee by boys in *mũhĩĩro* dances.

Thaba

Another ornament of white colobus fur was worn by old men on the legs in the *mũthũngũci* dance, and by warriors in the *kĩbaata* and *mũgoiyo* dances.

Njarai (*or Njaraai*)

This was also of white colobus fur and worn on the leg by old men in the *mũthũngũci* dance.

Thũmbĩ

This was a head ornament made from the mane of a lion or a big baboon and used only by warriors when going raiding or to war. No one could wear a *thũmbĩ* for a dance or in everyday life.

Feathers and Hair

Types of Ornaments and Articles

Mũhĩĩro wa Ihĩĩ

A head ornament used by boys for certain dances was made on a framework of an oval hoop of *mũthandĩka* wood made the size of the face from (p.371) forehead to chin. To this were attached (by string) a large number of tail feathers of buzzard and/or guinea fowl. The *mũhĩĩro* was kept in position by means of two straps tied behind the head.

Mũhĩĩro wa Aanake

This was similar to the above, but made of ostrich feathers stuck into a framework of stiff leather rather than wood.

Gĩtukũ

A head-dress worn on the back of the head was made of ostrich feathers stuck into a frame consisting of two hoops of leather sewn together. It was fastened to the back of the head by thin, soft leather tapes tied round the forehead just above the ears.

Mbũiga

Vulture feathers were split in half along the rib and were then tied in vast quantities to the hair.

Gĩcĩgĩ (*also called Mũiyũrio*)

Sometimes a warrior, instead of having vulture feathers attached to his hair, had them fitted to a string bag made to fit like a cap and called *gĩcĩgĩ*.

Riba

A feather cloak of vulture feathers was made on a leather base. I have never seen one and cannot describe it.

Nduthu (*also called Thiũrũ*)

This was a special cap of clipped black ostrich feathers for the top of spears when they were not in use. It was made on a framework of leather. This was a custom borrowed from the Maasai about 1890.

p.372
Ngũgũ

When , a warrior had killed an enemy in war, for about a month thereafter he had to carry a staff to which was tied red feathers from the wings of a bird called *ngũgũ* (Hartlaub's Touraco).

Gĩcuthĩ

This was a fly whisk made from the tail hairs of the wildebeeste (*ngati*). To make it, a long string was strung between two sticks and the hairs of the tail were all pulled out and tied as a fringe to this string. The string was then wound spirally round a specially cut wooden handle securely fixed.

Horn, Ivory and Bone

These materials were used only for a few purposes by the Kikuyu.

Haco

This was an arm ornament worn by young men, and made by special craftsmen either from buffalo horn or from rhino horn. It is well described and illustrated by Routledge (1910).

Ngotho

This was an ivory arm ornament worn by warriors and elders. It was shaped like a small *njagua* and is illustrated by Routledge.

Gacũhĩ ka Ihũngũ

Rings were sometimes made by warriors and elders from the hooves of the cattle which they ate at meat feasts.

p.373
Rũhĩa rũa Njohi

Drinking horns were made from ox horns carefully pared and carved with a knot at the base.

Hihi

Cupping horns were made from short ox horns. They had a hole bored in the top end for use. (see Chapter 21).

Ngũri

This was a whistle made from the horns of bushbuck, and was used in hunting to enable the hunters to keep in touch with each other. Sometimes the horns of a female Thompson's gazelle were used.

Coro wa Inamũru

This was the war horn and dance horn made from the horn of a greater kudu.

Thongori

This was a horn trumpet made from the horn of an oryx.

Njũgũma

Some special ceremonial clubs were made from rhino horn and were used only by elders.

Kĩnya kĩa Mbakĩ

Snuff boxes, as well as being made of wood or from a small gourd, were sometimes made of rhino and other horn, and of ivory.

p.374
Horns of Duiker and Dik-dik

Little horns of duiker and dik-dik were often seen hanging from the necklaces of Kikuyu people, but these were charms, not ornaments and will be dealt with in a later chapter.

Kĩbĩri

An ox bone was used in making the special soup stirrer which has been described under "Woodwork".

Stone and Minerals

Stone was used by the Kikuyu to make a few objects of general utility.

Ihiga rĩa Gũkia

Grinding stones of the saddle-quern type were always obtained by trade from the Kikuyu north of the Chania River. There, near the rivers called Thagana (near *Tũmũtũmũ*) and Mathioya, the local Kikuyu mined granite and cut and battered it into the required shapes. These were then traded down to South Kikuyu country. (see Chapter 13).

Ihiga rĩa Aturi

The anvil of a smith or wire worker was made of granite and imported from North Kikuyu.

Ngomongo

Rounded pebbles and stone balls of quartz were collected in the Mbagathi area, and were also found from time to time in South Kikuyu on old Neolithic sites. These were used for roughening the saddle-querns when they were worn smooth and for polishing swords and spears.

p.375
Ithaatha

Lumps of pumice stone were collected from the areas where they occurred and were commonly used as sandpaper to rub objects smooth.

Barikũma

Obsidian was collected by smiths and burnt to a fine, white powder, which was used in magic to drive away excessive rain.

Thĩrĩga

Good quality red ochre was not found in South Kikuyu, but was obtained from Kikuyu north of the Chania by trade (see Chapter 13).

Thĩrĩga wa Mathũri

A poor quality red ochre occurred in several parts of South Kikuyu, but this was used only by women for their clothing, and was not considered suitable for mixing with oil or fat for anointing the body. It was therefore not extensively mined.

Mbũrũ

Yellow ochre occurred in the rocks of Kikuyu country. It was not extensively mined, but was dug by warriors for their own use from time to time.

Ngoikoni

A soft yellow stone used in a war paint for the *kĩbaata* dance was mined in various places in South Kikuyu. This stone, and also a harder stone called *mahiga ma irumi*, were often found in the same quarry as *gĩtuuto*, or soapstone.

p.376
Thegeme

This was a blue powdery stone used in decorating shields and dance ornaments. It was mined in North Kikuyu and traded.

Ira

White clay was dug north of Mount Kenya in Kikuyu country by the foot of a certain hill called Karĩma ka Ira. It was traded down to South Kikuyu. Diatomite was sometimes used as a substitute.

Mũũnyũ

Saline earth was dug at a number of places in Kikuyu country for the cattle and sheep, and it was also used by men and boys to whiten their bodies for certain dances.

Igata

Soda was mined from Lake Magadi in Maasai country by a special guild of "soda diggers", who were apart from the other Kikuyu in that they could not participate in the sacrifices of any Kikuyu family other than that of another "soda digger". Their work was hazardous, for they had to traverse about 60 miles of Maasai country to get to the mines, and then they had to mine the soda and carry it back to Kikuyu country. In doing this they were risking their lives, for if the Maasai found them there they were massacred. This will be further dealt with in Chapter 13.

Vegetable Dyes, Poison and Gum

Gakarakũ Kairũ

The vegetable dye made from the roots of *gakarakũ kairũ* was used for dying sword sheaths (*njora*) and has already been described under "Leather Work".

p.377
Cenga

This was a bright red powder obtained by collecting and drying a water alga called *cenga*, and then burning it. It gave a lasting red dye used on shields and dance ornaments.

Ũrũrũ

Poison was made from a variety of plants; its manufacture is described Chapter 12.

Ũriru

This was a gum made from the bulb of a small rock plant (*Sansevieria parva*—see Botanical Appendix). It was quite a strong glue, and was used for fixing arrow heads.

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Chapter 9

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Chapter 10 - Beauty and Hygiene

Introduction
Beauty
Body Hygiene

Introduction

The Kikuyu took great pride in their appearance, and younger people spent a lot of time making their bodies beautiful and attractive to the opposite sex. Similarly, they were quite particular about body hygiene. Both these concerns involved the performance of various operations upon the body.

Beauty

Tattooing

Although the Kikuyu had no form of tattooing that was as permanent as that practised by the Maoris and by Europeans, there was a form of skin decoration that must be classed as tattooing. It consisted of imparting "patterns" to the human skin without raising any kind of scar or cicatrice. This operation was called *kuora mĩokia*, and it was always performed by skilled people who knew the customary patterns and who were of sufficiently high artistic ability to be able to mark these pattern; on the skin freehand, without making unsightly and irregular marks.

The person to be tattooed was made to lie on his or her side and the operator used a stem of .the plant called *gakarakũ kairũ* to scratch the outline of the desired pattern on to the skin of the face. The *gakarakũ* stem, though not rough enough to make the skin bleed, grazed the skin enough for the marks to be clearly visible. Having thus "pencilled" the pattern on to the skin, the juice of the plant called *karoco* (the cashew nut) was squeezed into a small leaf or a piece of broken gourd. The operator dipped a bracken leaf stem into this juice, and using it as a brush, applied the juice to the pattern already outlined, taking great care not to let it run off the desired pattern. This juice dried quickly, and when it was dry the patient turned over on the other side to have the second cheek similarly treated.

The acid of this juice caused severe pain for several days, but when the place healed it left a pattern which would remain indelible for three or (p.379) four years, or even longer. Girls always had a pattern known as *mĩokia*, consisting of three parallel lines round each eye from the middle of the forehead to the cheek. From the uppermost of these three lines, little "rays" about a ¼in. long were marked. Men and boys had an entirely different, square pattern, tattooed upon the cheeks, called *gĩca*. A star pattern was also used by both males and females, and was known as *gĩkonyo* (literally, a big navel).

Mburio

Girls who were approaching puberty commonly had cicatrisation patterns made on their breasts and abdomens in certain recognised patterns. The object of this cicatrisation was to make themselves attractive to the young men.

In several of the dances, and also when practising restricted sexual intercourse (*nguĩko*), the girls bared their breasts to those of their male partners. It was said that these cicatrisations on the abdomen and breasts were not only attractive to the eye of the male, but also to the touch. Men liked to fondle those scars with their fingers and to feel the raised scars pressing into their own flesh.

Mburio were made as follows. The patient lay down on the ground on her back, and another girl took either an awl with the point bent over like a hooked thorn or an actual thorn of the *mũtũra* plant, pricked the skin with it, and hooked it up slightly on the point of the thorn or the awl. Then with a razor she cut the raised skin slightly. This process continued until there were three parallel rows of incisions curving round each breast from the sternum to the point below the armpit. Similar groups of three curved lines of incisions were made on the abdomen on either side of the navel. The incisions then had the juice of the vines, tendrils, and leaves of the yam (*Diocrorea*) rubbed into them. These were first chewed in the mouth by the operator, to bruise them, and then rubbed on. This caused the flesh where each incision had been made to swell into a small, hard cicatrice.

Ng'athi

These were raised scars on the *mons veneris* of girls. They were normally cut by a girl's mother or by an older sister in the same manner as the *mburio*, and were similarly treated with the juice of yam leaves and tendrils. They were made to be felt and not to be seen by the opposite (p.380) sex. Men regarded them as attractive to touch, and it was not uncommon for a man to say to a girl when dancing with her, "I want to *gwata ng'athi* (hold or touch the *ng'athi*), and if she said he could, he would put his hand under the pubic apron and fondle these *ng'athi* on the *mons veneris*. This was not forbidden, but no man could touch the genitalia of any girl, for this was taboo. The *ng'athi*, therefore, took the place of the manual caressing of the genitalia that is common among other races.

Tharĩni

Boys and young men did not normally scarify their bodies by the process described above, but instead burnt little rows of scars on to their wrists, upper arms, and the outside of the thighs. This was done with a piece of stem of sorghum corn shaped like a cigarette. It was lit in the fire and then applied to the body like a branding iron; little round scars were burnt in line. Nothing was applied to these burns, but they always left a little patch of shiny, smooth skin when they healed. These decorations were usually placed on the outer aspects of the wrists, on the upper arms (where vaccination scars are found), and on the leg from knee to thigh. Before applying the red-hot sorghum stem, the spot to be scarred dampened with spittle so that the scar should not be too deep.

Ndemwa

Many Kikuyu, male and female, had a group of scars on their bodies in little squares and rectangles. These were not decorations, but were the result of having been "bled" in connection with certain illnesses (see Chapter 21).

Ndũũgĩra

The cartilage of the upper border of the ear was always pierced during childhood, and this operation was always performed by women. A mother would firmly grasp her little boy or girl when the child was about five or six years old and push a couple of thorns of the *mũthuthi* tree through the cartilage of the top of each ear, from the inside of the ear outward. Having been pushed through, these thorns were left in position, but the sharp tips were broken off so that they would

not prick the child's head. The thorns remained in this position until the wound had (p.381) healed, when they were pulled out and a sharpened piece of wood slightly larger than the thorn was pushed through to distend the hole further. This was in turn replaced in a few weeks by a *kanyori*, that is, a small piece of stem of *kĩgutu* thatching grass. Finally, a little bit of sorghum stem (also called *kanyori*) with a diameter about that of a cigarette was inserted into the hole to stretch it still further. When the first hole had been fully stretched a second hole was similarly perforated, and in the case of girls a third also, but boys rarely had more than two such holes in each cartilage.

Matũ

The lower lobe of each ear was not pierced until the children were nearing the time for their initiation, that is, 12 years old for girls and 17 years for boys. The piercing of the ear-lobe was a more important event than the piercing of the cartilage, and in the case of a boy or girl who was the first-born child of the mother (*mwana wa irigithathi*), the lobes could not be pierced until the mother's brother (*nyarũme*) had given his permission. Before he would do this, beer had to be brewed for him, and when he drank it he gave his blessing to the piercing of the ears of his first-born nephew or niece. He always received at that time the promise of seven goats and sheep, called *mburi cia matũ* (sheep and goats for the ear-lobes). By custom, the mother's brother was supposed to be given these when the first-born child had the lobes of his or her ears pierced, but they were never, in fact, handed over until the child was initiated. They had to be formally promised, however, at this time. The seven animals consisted of a ram called *ndũrũme ya kĩrĩya* (or *kĩrĩra*), a virgin ewe, and fivegoats.

The piercing of the lower lobes was carried out not by the child's mother, but by an old woman past childbearing. The operation was performed with a sharp pointed stick of *mũnderendu* wood about as long as and, at the unpointed end, as thick, as a cigarette. The point of this stick was pushed through the lobe with a sudden jerk, and the bit of wood was then left in position until the wound had healed, then it was pushed further through the hole so that the thickest end was distending the lobe. After a month or so, the stick was pulled out and a thicker one inserted, and so on until the lobe was so distended that a stick with a diameter of 2-3in. could be easily inserted.

In some Kikuyu families there was a rule that the piercing of the ear-lobe might not in any circumstances take place before initiation, but rather on the day of the *riuna* ceremony (symbolic ear-piercing), after the actual circumcision or clitoridectomy operation was over.

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Kwehwo

All Kikuyu had their two lower central incisors pulled out in early youth. The object of this operation was dual: it was considered to give added beauty to the smile, and it provided a gap through which water or gruel could be given to a sick person if he or she was too ill to open the mouth, or was suffering from lock-jaw.

Both men and women (usually unrelated to the child) performed this operation, using the point of a small, two-edged knife. It did not normally take place until the permanent teeth were in position, occasionally, however, a child had two of his lower front milk teeth removed owing to the operator's mistaking them for the permanent teeth. Such an individual might have to undergo the operation a second time, but sometimes could evade this and so retain a full complement of teeth in later life. I know of several elderly Kikuyu who had their milk teeth removed in error in this way, and who therefore have no gap (*wehe*) in the teeth of the lower jaw.

Njarũmi

Many Kikuyu, in addition to the removal of the two lower central incisors, had the two central upper incisors chipped, so as to leave a small triangular shaped gap (called *njarũmi*) between them.

This was a purely voluntary operation performed after a man or girl had been initiated. The operator was always a wire worker, and the tool used was the wire worker's cold chisel. The process was called *gwatia njarũmi*. No fee was payable, but the person who had been thus operated upon was expected to give his services for the rest of the day to the wire worker in his work of wire drawing.

Nail Paring

The nails of the fingers and toes were cut with a small knife, and sometimes even with the sharp edges of fighting swords. Every person cared for his or her own nails and mothers pared the nails of their children. The nails of infants were not cut with a knife but were bitten off by the mother with her teeth.

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Hairdressing

Kwenja Njũĩrĩ

The head was completely shaved at fairly regular intervals by all Kikuyu except warriors, who let their hair grow so long that it could be plaited and decorated. Even they periodically had their hair shaved off in connection with certain ceremonies, as we shall see later. The only exceptions were connected with illness or with other special circumstances when a person might go about with an unshaved head and unkempt hair for a period of a year or two. When such a person finally had hair shaved, a ram was slaughtered in sacrifice for purification.

In ordinary circumstances, head shaving was always carried out by women, and normally a mother shaved her own children's heads, and a husband's. Women and girls were shaved by other women or girls, and warriors were shaved by their mothers or by girl friends. The head was shaved with a special razor (*rũenji*) which has been described under iron objects in Chapter 9.

A warrior whose hair had grown very long sometimes had it cut short with a knife, instead of having it all shaved off, and then started to grow it and plait it all over again. In fact, no warrior ever had his hair completely shaved except in connection with rites and ceremonies such as will be described in later chapters.

The shaving of the head was not so much for the sake of cleanliness as for beauty. Long hair, except that of warriors and maidens, which was plaited, greased, and covered with red ochre, was considered unsightly.

The hair of the head was always hidden when shaved off and not just thrown away, for if an enemy got hold of anyone's hair he would be able to use it to make witchcraft against him or her. Another reason for hiding the hair was to prevent birds from taking it to line their nests, since this could cause ill luck. Further, if ewes or she-goats trampled on human hair they would lose their milk and the kids and lambs would die.

The following were the principal styles of hairdressing adopted by various ages and sexes.

Children

Small children had the whole head shaved about every four or five weeks, so that they went through a regular cycle of being completely hairless and having the whole head covered with hair.

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Boys and Girls

As soon as little boys or girls were old enough to start dancing the *ngũcũ* dance, the style of their hairdressing changed. The hair was kept closely shaved over the temples and forehead and was allowed to grow only in a circle about 4in. in diameter on the crown of the head. Periodically, when this circle of hair grew too large and unkempt, it was completely shaved off and the same process started all over again.

Older Boys

As boys grew older and the time for their initiation approached, they adopted a different hair style. The hair was allowed to grow fairly long, and it was then twisted into little locks between the thumb and finger. Each such lock was covered in red ochre mixed to a thick paste, so that when completed, this style of hairdo gave the whole head the appearance of being covered in red knobs. This process was called *kũbĩra njuĩrĩ* (to make it into tight curls).

Boys before initiation were not allowed to *gũikia njuĩrĩ* (to fling one's locks about), which was a style of hairdressing allowed only to warriors and initiated girls. Even when their hair was dressed in the style allowed them as described above, boys were liable to be seized by the warriors and have their locks cut off if they were long enough to "dance about" when the head was shaken.

Girls

The older uninitiated girls and the initiated but unmarried girls had only two styles of hairdressing available to them. Either they could keep the hair of their crowns fairly short and well anointed with fat and red ochre, or they could let the hair grow long and have the strands twisted and plaited into a large number of individual tails which would hang down to the nape of the neck, like bobbed hair. Girls' hair was never allowed to grow any longer than that, so as it grew it had to be clipped. Apart from the round area of the crown, the head was kept closely shaved all the time, being attended to every second or third day.

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Warriors

The most elaborate forms of hairdressing were those adopted by the Kikuyu warriors.· The only hair allowed to grow was that forming a circle on the crown of the head; the temples, forehead, and nape of the neck were kept closely shaved all the time. As soon as the hair of the crown was about 1in. long, a warrior would sit down and his companions would divide his hair into locks and bind each of these with string so that each tightly bound lock was about as thick as a match stick and about 1in. long. These bound locks were anointed with oil and red ochre, and after about a fortnight they were attended to again, and the string binding each lock extended further towards the scalp as the hair grew.

When these bound locks were about 3in. long, the string was unwound from each lock, and the hair of each was skilfully twisted (*kuogotha*) so that it was like a short length of twine. It was again smeared with red ochre and fat and allowed to grow longer. A goal of every warrior was to have his hair so long that it reached the middle of his back, and for most dances it was worn in this form. All the hair, however, was not trained backwards; a parting was made across the front of the circle

at right angles to the axis of the skull, and the twisted locks in front of this parting were divided into three divisions, the hair in each division being bound into "bunches", each of which was called a *kĩgũta*. The long hair of the rest of the head, once it had grown to sufficient length, was kept tied in a "pigtail" on ordinary occasions, being wound round with a soft leather tape. For all dances other than the *mũgoiyo*, the pigtail was undone, and the hair allowed to lie loose and long.

Young Married Women

Apart from brides who had not yet given birth to a baby, and who did their hair in the same way as unmarried girls, married women did not dress their hair in any complicated fashion, except for the occasion of special dances. Normally, their hair was simply allowed to grow on the crown of the head, while the temples and forehead were kept closely shaven, and when the hair of the crown grew too long, it, too, was shaved off and the process started again.

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Young Married Men

The younger married men who were still members of the regiment on active service did their hair in the same style as young warriors.

Senior Married Men

Once a man had reached an age when his children were old enough to be initiated, he ceased to have his hair treated like the younger men. His head was simply shaved clean periodically, and in the interval the hair was allowed to grow over the whole head.

Older Married Women

As soon as a married woman's eldest child was initiated, her head was completely shaved, and after that she never again grew her hair in the form of a circle on the crown of her head with the rest of it closely cropped. Instead, she shaved her whole head periodically, and in the intervals allowed the hair to grow over the whole head.

Of the seven goats and sheep which were paid to a woman's brother on the occasion of the initiation of her eldest child, one was called *ndũrũme kĩrĩya* (a ram for the complete shaving), and this name was derived from the fact that the mother's hair from this time onwards had to be worn in the manner just described, called *kwenjwo kĩrĩya*.

Gũkũũra Nderu

The facial hair of men was seldom shaved with a razor, but was normally pulled out with special tweezers (*ngũũri*). With the exception of a few medicine-men, no man ever allowed the beard or moustache hairs to grow, for they were regarded as unsightly, and a man with a beard or moustache would ordinarily have no chance of marrying or of having lovers. The task of pulling out the facial hairs was one that every man did for himself, although sometimes when having his head shaved by his wife a man would also let her shave his chin and upper lip, but this was not a normal custom.

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Pubic Hair

Every adult male and female pulled out all their pubic hairs using either the finger nails or else the thumb and the blade of a knife. It was strictly taboo to shave the pubic hair, and if anyone did so they would have to be purified. Moreover, if a woman shaved her pubic hair instead of pulling it out, her husband could never again have sexual intercourse with her or he would certainly die.

Ampit Hair

The hair that grew under the arms of men and women was regarded as most unsightly, and was therefore never allowed to grow. Each person pulled out his or her hair in this region as it grew.

Body Hair

Hair on the chest, arms, and legs was also regarded as unsightly, and no man who had any thought for his personal appearance would be seen with such hair. The method of removing it was to anoint the hairy parts with a thick coating of river mud, which acted like lather or shaving soap, and held the hairs rigid. This mud was scraped off when it was nearly dry with a sharp knife, and as it came away the hair came too, some being pulled out by the roots and some cut with the knife.

Body Hygiene

Circumcision

All males were circumcised at the time of their initiation to manhood, this operation serving as the outward and visible sign of manhood. The operation was chiefly performed because of its religious and social significance, but at the same time it was regarded as serving a hygienic purpose. It was held that a man could not keep his genitalia clean and free from unpleasant odour unless he was circumcised. The details of the operation and the attendant ceremonies will be found in Chapter 16.

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Clitoridectomy

Kikuyu girls, on passing from childhood to maidenhood, underwent the operation of clitoridectomy. This had a purely ritual, religious and ceremonial significance, and had nothing to do with hygiene and personal appearance. It was, however, held that a girl who had not been through this operation could never bear healthy children. The details of this operation and accompanying rites are given in Chapter 16.

Washing

Ordinarily, a person went down to the river to wash about twice a week. Normally no one washed themselves in the homestead, though when a person came in from a day's work he or she would take a little water to wash the hands before eating, unless there had been an opportunity to wash in the river on the way home from the fields. Children, other than infants in arms, were seldom washed, but were sometimes sent to a stream to wash themselves.

Men who went to wash at the river would not hesitate to wash at the point where the footpath reached the river, but women and girls were expected to go a little downstream and wash out of sight of the public footpath. Young men could strip naked and wash in the streams in the presence of young women and girls, provided they observed the recognised avoidance taboos, which are dealt with in Chapter 19. Women could not do so, and women and girls only stripped and washed all over in the presence of females of their own age.

Married men, when they went to bathe, had to do so privately or in the company of men of their own age, and no young man, boy, or girl was allowed to see them washing. If any young person approached a stream and found that elders were washing themselves there, they could not proceed until the elders had once more donned their cloaks.

Apart from washing, great care was taken of the body, and everyone anointed themselves with oil or fat so as to prevent the skin from becoming dry and ugly. Young men and young initiated girls also anointed themselves with red ochre to make their bodies more beautiful.

Mothers washed their babies either in the home, or down at a stream if the weather was hot and the water in the stream was not too cold. They had no basins and the baby was usually held by one arm and the water splashed over it.

Menstruating women were forbidden to go and bathe, and before (p.389) doing so in any stream or river when the menstruation was over, a woman had to wash herself in her hut or, in the case of an unmarried girl, in her mother's hut.

The smell of sweat on the body was regarded as very unpleasant, and a person who had sweated freely and not bathed was regarded with disgust, and not allowed to sit near anyone else. Nor would anyone eat food with grimy hands, or perform such tasks as squeezing sugar-cane juice for beer, or even cutting up meat, without first washing their hands. The Kikuyu expected, and observed, a definite standard of cleanliness.

Urination

The act of urination was not regarded as one which had to be performed in a complete privacy, and a man or woman going along a footpath would simply step to the edge of the path and urinate. At the same time, no man or woman would deliberately urinate in the presence of others, except members of the same age-group, and if he or she saw other people approaching, would wait until they had passed. At night an elderly man would sometimes urinate inside the men's hut, but no man would do so in his wife's hut, and no woman might ever urinate in her own or anyone else's hut. Even at night a woman had to go outside behind her own hut.

Small children were allowed to urinate on the floor of the hut in that part of it which was occupied by the sheep (the *kwerũ*). Infants in arms often urinated while being carried on the backs of their mothers or their sisters, and this was not regarded as a serious thing; the mother or sister merely picked a bunch of leaves to wipe herself with.

Defecation

It was absolutely taboo for anyone, other than infants, to defecate inside the hut or inside the homestead courtyard, and if anyone did so ceremonial purification was necessary. There were no latrines, and a man or woman would simply go into the bush to answer the call of nature. For this reason, an area around, and especially behind, every homestead was kept uncultivated so that anyone who wished to defecate while in the homestead could repair to the patch of bush quickly. As a result, the bush in the immediate vicinity of any homestead was foul-smelling, but this was not considered insanitary.

Babies that were still being carried about on their mother's backs simply defecated into the leather carrying skin (*ngoi*) in which they were (p.390) slung. As soon as the mother was aware that they had done so, she unslung the child, wiped the child and cleaned the carrying skin with a large bunch of leaves. At night every mother took a large bunch of *mũigoya* and *muondwe* leaves into the hut to be used to wipe up the faeces of her baby and her smaller children. These leaves would be thrown on to the midden next day.

Handkerchiefs

The Kikuyu had no handkerchief in the European sense of the word, but every self-respecting man and woman would carry a bunch of *muondwe* leaves when performing any task that involved perspiring, and wipe the sweat off with these leaves. This was especially true in connection with dancing, and these leaves were then *de rigeur* as a toilet requisite.

The nose was blown by holding it between the finger and thumb and blowing violently so as to expel the mucous on to the ground. Normally, a person would then pick some leaves of such a plant as *muondwe* or *mũigoya* to wipe the nose with. Mothers blew the noses of their young children for them, and then wiped them with leaves. Very small babies had their noses blown by the mother putting the tip of her thumb on the bridge of the nose and pressing gently, at the same time drawing the thumb forward to the nostrils. This expressed the mucous, which was then wiped off. (Incidentally, this practice was probably partially responsible for the flattened nose bridges among most Kikuyu, for in early childhood the bones are sufficiently plastic to be affected by such treatment).

Care of the Teeth

Teeth were carefully cleaned with a brush made from the stem of a *mũcũgũcũgũ* bush or a *mũtathi* bush, or with a piece of the root of a castor oil plant. Such a toothbrush was called *mũkiinyĩ*, and the act of tooth cleaning was called *gũkiinya magego*. The toothbrush was made from the stem of one of the above mentioned bushes, cut to about 6in. long, a piece about a ¼-½in. in diameter being chosen. Then with a knife the bark was removed for a distance of about 1in. and the wood was chewed to a pulp until it looked rather like a small paint brush with white bristles. These woods had a pleasant flavour, and left the mouth with a "clean" taste

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Spitting

The Kikuyu spat freely whenever they had phlegm in their throats, and to spit in public was not regarded as an unclean habit. Spitting of spittle as distinct from phlegm was also common, and in certain circumstances it was enjoined by custom as an indication of blessing and goodwill.

Lice and Bed Bugs

Both of these insect pests were known to the Kikuyu, and various measures were taken against them. In the case of bed-bugs (*ngũngũni*), boiling water was sprayed all over the affected bed. The bed was then allowed to dry. This boiling water, if applied in quantities, completely killed off the bugs. Lice (*ndaa*) had a habit of getting into fur garments and into people's hair. If the garment became too seriously affected it was boiled, while if lice affected the hair of the head, the hair was shaved off.

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Chapter 11 - Song and Dance

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Music

Introduction

Among the Kikuyu, dancing and singing were so closely linked together that they may almost be described as inseparable. Every dance was accompanied by vocal music, usually in the form of solo and chorus. Musical instruments, even in the most limited sense of drums and horns, were not used to mark the rhythm of dances as they were in so many other African tribes. Dancing, moreover, had a far more important place in the life of the people than it has in Europe, and only a few dances can be said to have been intended for amusement only. Rather, dances were an essential and significant part of many ceremonies, or, in the case of a dance such as the *kĩbaata*, were organised either to assemble the people to hear some important pronouncement, or as a preliminary to a raid on an enemy tribe.

From early childhood to advanced middle age, each division of the community had its own special dances. The dances of the children and adolescents were a form of training for the ceremonial dances of the initiation period. There were special dances, too, for those in actual training for initiation, and another dance for the novices after they had been initiated, but before they entered full adult status.

The warrior classes had their own dances, some of them for men only, others to be danced with the initiated girls. The latter, to a great extent, were dances designed for amusement, but had a definite sexual significance. They provided the means whereby young men and girls could meet freely and so choose satisfactory partners for marriage. At weddings, too, there was a special dance for women in which miming and acting played a large part, and in which the former custom of marriage by capture was symbolized.

The following were the principal Kikuyu dances, which will be described in this chapter:

Uninitiated people's dances

Rũkiũ	
Ngũcũ (1)	a. *Ngũitha*
	b. *Ngũcũ*
	c. *Mwereri*
Ngũcũ (2)	a. *Mwengeca*
	b. *Mbuuta*
Mũhĩĩro	a. *Mũriyĩri*
	b. *Kĩbũiya*
	c. *Hũngũ*
Mũũmbũro	a. *Mũũmbũro*
	b.*Mwĩthigo*
Matuumo	

Initiates and novices' dances

Waine

Warriors' and maidens' dances

Gĩcukia
Mũgoiyo
Mũcogo
Ndiiri
Ngurũ
Kĩbaata
Kaarĩ

Elderly people's dances

Mũthũmũ
Mũthũngũci

Women's and girls' dances
Gĩtiiro
Nduumo

Uninitiated People's Dances and Songs

Rũkiũ

Small boys and girls at the ages of about seven and nine respectively, danced the *rũkiũ*. The only real object of this dance was to teach the children some of the steps and actions of the dances of later childhood, and to accustom them to moving their feet and bodies in a definite rhythm. Small boys and girls formed rings holding each other by interlocking their little fingers, with boy and girl alternating in the ring. The whole ring then danced slowly round in a circle chanting the word R—Ū—K—I—Ũ over and over again to a simple rhythmic tune. The slightly older children acted as instructors to the younger ones until they were old enough to pass on to the *ngũcũ* dances.

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Ngũcũ Group of Dances (*1*)

There were altogether five distinct dances which were grouped together under the general title of *ngũcũ*. We will first of all examine the three dances which I have designated *ngũcũ* (1).

This dance was for all boys and girls from the age of ten to the time of their initiation. As girls were normally initiated just before puberty at the age of 12 or 13, they only participated in the *ngũcũ* dances for two or three years before passing on to other more elaborate dances. Boys were seldom initiated until they were at least 17 years of age, so that they participated in this dance year after year, and it is therefore hardly surprising to find that in all the sub-divisions of the *ngũcũ* dances much more emphasis was laid on the boys' part than on that of the girls.

Before describing the dance, we must briefly describe the ornaments considered necessary for it. The boys anointed their bodies with red ochre mixed with fat in imitation of the warriors, and they wore special belts made from *ngũnyi* seeds, which were sewn on to a leather foundation in imitation of the warriors' belts called *mũnyoro*. The boys called these belts of theirs *ndoho*. Their hair was decorated with vulture and guinea-fowl feathers, while the forehead and neck were liberally covered with red ochre. Round their necks the boys wore necklaces also made of *ngũnyi* seeds, and, if they could borrow one, they also wore a *kĩnyata* bead collar. On their arms they had the type of armlet known as *ngaguana*, and on their ankles the special ornaments made of black and white colobus monkey fur and known as *maruku*.

For the dances of the *ngũcũ* group, the boys always wore their ordinary leather cloaks, and in addition a small leather covering for the buttocks (*gĩthere*).

The girls also liberally covered their bodies and heads with red ochre and fat and wore their ordinary clothes consisting of a small skin cloak and a pubic apron. From their older initiated sisters they borrowed a bead belt, head ornaments, and necklaces, and they were particularly fond of a kind of necklace made from the ends of gourds and called *mũmbũthũ*.

Both the older boys and the girls often had their cheeks and foreheads tattooed, but not the younger boys.

The first public dancing of the *ngũcũ* started each year when the bulrush millet crop was about 1ft high. Then the older boys made arrangements for the dancing and appointed a day for the first dance of their territorial unit. The place chosen was always one of the larger homesteads with a (p.395) wide courtyard, and the dancing started when there was a nearly full moon, for it always took place by moonlight and firelight.

When the *ngũcũ* dancing for the year started, the children of two adjoining ridges would meet together at the appointed place, and the dancing would commence by the boys dancing the *ngũitha* dance alone, while girls looked on. When the boys and girls of each village knew that the season of the *ngũcũ* dancing was approaching, they would practice all the various parts of the *ngũcũ* on their own before assembling to dance in public, so as not to disgrace their village when the dancing took place in public.

Ngũitha

To perform the *ngũitha* dance, the boys laid aside their wooden spears (*macengi*) and their bark shields (*matandara*) and formed a large circle facing inwards. Each boy had his club (*ndotono*) in his hand. The girls formed a circle behind the boys, each girl taking up her position at the back of the boy who would be her partner for the next stage of the dance, and resting her hand on his belt of *ngũnyi* seeds (*ndoho*). The girls, however, did not actually dance the *ngũitha*. They merely stood thus behind their partners. The boys forming the circle all linked themselves together by interlocking little fingers, and then two soloists took their places in the middle of the ring and improvised words to form the verses and chorus to the *ngũitha* tune. In this song they sang the praises of boys in the territorial unit who had distinguished themselves in some boyish activity. Then the whole circle took up the chorus, at the same time letting go their little fingers, jumping up and down feverishly, and shaking their clubs. Then they linked fingers again and the soloists resumed their song, and so on until they tired of the *ngũitha* and decided to dance the *ngũcũ* proper.

Ngũcũ Proper

For the *ngũcũ* proper, the girls moved to the inside of the circle and each girl faced the partner that she had chosen when the *ngũitha* started. In this, as in all the Kikuyu dances, it was the females who selected the partners they wished to dance with, and a man or boy could get a (p.396) particular partner only by making himself so attractive that she, of her own initiative, chose him. By custom and etiquette he could not choose a partner for himself.

The boys now cast their clubs aside and each pair of partners took hold of each other in readiness for the dance. This was called *gũkunyana*. The boys put their hands on their partners' shoulders and the girls rested their hands on the boys' hips. Very often there were more girls than boys participating in the dance, in which case two girls could partner one boy. A boy who had two partners had them both standing side by side in front of him and he rested one hand on a shoulder of each, and they each rested one hand on one of his hips. Two boys then went into the middle of the ring with their partners to act as leaders of the dance and to sing the solo parts which provided the "music" for the dance.

One of the two boys in the middle sang the solo, while the other marked time with his feet and with gestures of his hands and arms. As they did so they both walked with their partners slowly round and round the circle When the point for the chorus was reached, the soloist's assistant took up the chorus first and led all the other dancers in singing it, while he and the soloist and their partners danced the dance that went with the chorus in the middle of the circle. At a signal from

the soloist and the leader of the chorus, everyone stopped singing, and the soloist took up the second verse of his song. After about three quarters of an hour of dancing thus, the song ended and the whole party broke up to rest and refresh themselves with gruel and food that had been brought for them by their mothers and older sisters who were watching the dancing.

Then the *ngũcũ* dance started again. The boys formed a circle and the girls came into the middle and chose fresh partners, for they might not dance again with those whom they had partnered for the first part of the dance. When every girl had chosen her partner, two fresh boys and their partners entered the circle and acted as soloist and leader of the chorus, and the dance went on as before. After dancing thus three times, and resting and refreshing themselves three times, the girls and boys formed up for the fourth and last round of dancing for the evening, after which the dance broke up and the boys and girls went to their homes, the girls escorted by the boys.

The dance was always watched by many spectators, the mothers of the children being particularly anxious to find out what the other boys thought of their sons, and to hear what references would be made to them in the songs of the soloists. Every time the women of any village heard the name of one of their boys mentioned in the song, they broke into the ululation known as the *ngemi*, as a sign of pleasure and praise.

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Mwereri

Towards the end of the time when the *ngũcũ* (1) dances were in progress, and before the dancing changed over from night dancing to daylight dancing, in which the boys and girls of many different territories took part together, it was customary for the *ngũitha* and *ngũcũ* proper, to be followed by one round of the *mwereri* dance. For this dance the boys and their partners knelt in a circle facing each other and holding each other in the way described above. The soloist, the leader of the chorus, and their partners, also knelt in the centre of the ring. Even while the solo was being sung, everyone was swaying from the waist and keeping time with the head. When the chous was reached, the swaying became faster and more furious in time to the words of the chorus. The words of the *mwereri* song were not improvised, and were as follows:

Solo: *Nĩngũrĩmagĩra-hũ! Ĩ-mwereri-ĩ,*
Mũgũnda wĩgĩa gĩa kũrũma, kamwereri!
I was weeding the crops, *hũ!* Oh swaying one,
In a garden which has got something for eating in it, little swaying one!

Chorus: *Kamwereri, wa mũita-iria,*
Ngariũra!
Ndarĩire ĩrĩa ya raba, kamwereri-ĩ-ĩ.
O little swaying one, child of the spiller of milk,
Swing me!
I ate the food of a miserly person, oh little swaying one.

Solo: *Ĩ-ndakua nĩũkarĩra? Ĩ-hũ, ĩ-mwereri-ĩ!*
Kana ũkehaka maguta-ĩ-ĩ-hũ? Kamwereri!
Oh, if I die, will you cry? *Ĩ-hũ*, oh little swaying one!
Or will you anoint yourself with oil? Little swaying one!

Chorus: As before.

Solo: *Ĩ wa kongũ na koiga, Ĩ-hũ, ĩ-mwereri!*
Na kanandũ ka maguta, ĩ-ĩ-hũ! Kamwereri!
Oh, you of the little cooking pot and the little half-gourd, *ĩ-hũ*, oh swaying one!
And the gourd bottle of oil, *ĩ-ĩ-hũ!* Little swaying one!

Chorus: As before.

The number of verses was great, and there was a good deal of variation in them from one territorial area to another, but the chorus was always the same, and the verses were not about people, as in the case of the other *ngũcũ* songs.

p.398
Boys and girls participating in these *ngũcũ* moonlight dances, being uninitiated, were absolutely forbidden to have sexual intercourse of any kind, but the bigger boys and girls did sometimes try to break this rule on the way to their homes after the dancing was over. If they were found out, they were severely beaten, but their opportunities for breaking the rules were few, for most girls were accompanied to the dance by their mothers and were escorted home by them afterwards. It was believed that boys or girls who offended against this general taboo would automatically become known at the time of their initiation, because when operated upon their wounds would not heal as quickly as those of their companions.

The *ngũcũ* of the types already described were always danced at night in the bigger courtyards until the bulrush millet harvest just before the March rains, when the dance became a daytime dance, and for this the boys and girls of a great number of territorial units met together on a big dancing field (*kĩhaaro*), where dances identical to those already described were danced.

Ngũcũ Group of Dances (*2*)

After the March rains had been on for some time and the maize crop was growing tall and coming into flower, the boys and girls danced the *ngũcũ* dances of the second group. These were always danced in the mornings from about 7 a.m. till 9 a.m., after which the girls and boys went off to their daily tasks. The clothing and ornaments for these *ngũcũ* dances were the same as for the earlier, night-time ones, but the participants did not anoint themselves with red ochre mixed with fat. Instead, the boys rubbed dry, white, powdered saline earth (*mũũnyũ*) on their faces and cheeks in lines and curves. These were called *thongo*. They also had patches of red ochre powder rubbed dry onto their shoulders and the back of the neck, these patches being called *ititio*. The girls also had *thongo* on their foreheads but never of white earth, only of red ochre powder.

The dances of the second *ngũcũ* group always took place on dancing fields and never in the courtyards of the homesteads. The boys came armed with their wooden spears, clubs, and bark shields (*matandara*). The reason for coming thus armed was that there was always a likelihood of the boys of one territorial unit provoking a fight with the boys of another, and, in fact, this was encouraged, to give the boys an opportunity to practice the arts of warfare and to make them brave and strong. The (p.399) *ngũcũ* dancing of this second group was divided into two parts, called *mwengeca* and *mbuutu*.

Mwengeca

For the *mwengeca* dance girls and boys formed a double circle with the boys facing inwards and the girls facing their partners as for the ordinary *ngũcũ*. The boys had, of course, laid aside their weapons, and the boys and girlss held each other as for the other dances. As before, two boys with their partners went into the centre of the circle and acted as soloist and chorus leader. The song and tune was, however, quite different, and the whole circle moved slowly round and round in time to the tune, the boys making a curious "scraping" step with their feet as they proceeded After three rounds of the *mwengeca* dance, each time with a fresh soloist and chorus leader, and with different partners, the party danced the *mbuutu* dance once and broke up.

Mbuutu

The *mbuutu* dance was similar to the *mwengeca*, but the whole double circle did not move round. Instead, the dancers marked time with their feet while the solo was being sung, and then each pair of partners jumped up and down together frantically while singing the chorus.

The words of the song and the tune of the *mbuutu* dance were not the same as the others, but the words were improvised by the soloist to a recognised *mbuutu* tune, of which there were several, all with the same rhythm and time.

Mũhĩĩro Group of Dances

The boys and girls who had reached such an age that they could reasonably hope to be allowed by their parents to go forward as candidates for initiation, arranged to dance the dances which were known as *mũhĩĩro* or *kũhĩĩra*.

The chief object of the *mũhĩĩro* dances was to make the elders consent to allow the participants to prepare for initiation and go on to the (p.400) *mũũmbũro* dances. Except for the last of the three in the *mũhĩĩro* series, the *hũngũ*, the girls took no part in them at all, and the first two were, in fact, not so much dances as exercises, and exhibitions of strength, skill, and stamina. All the girls who were hoping to be initiated, however, were always present at the dances as spectators, waiting for the *hũngũ* dance in which they, too, could take part.

The bigger boys of 17 and 18 started preparing for these dances as soon as the bulrush millet crop was planted, and in every village they practised the *kĩbũiya* and *mũnyĩri* dances of the *mũhĩĩro* series by moonlight and by firelight. For these practice dances they did not yet have the ornaments and accoutrements which were necessary when the dance became a public one, and in the daytime they spent much of their leisure time in preparing the ornaments and weapons which they would need, or in collecting the materials for making them, such as buzzard feathers, serval cat skins, etc. The following is a list of the essential equipment for the dances of this series. Each boy had to have: a buffalo horn (*rũhĩa rũa mbogo*), feathers of a buzzard and/or of a guinea-fowl, the skin of a serval cat or a leopard or, failing that, the skin of a white, or black and white goat, some colobus monkey skin, a special wooden armlet called *njagua* with points like horns on it, a wooden shield called *mũhengere*, and some vulture feathers.

These articles took some time to gather. Some of them were perhaps already in the possession of the boy's family, having been acquired and used by an elder brother or half-brother and then stored for the other members of the family, but in many cases boys had to acquire everything for themselves. In any case, a buffalo horn had to be acquired by each boy, because the nature of the dance was such that the buffalo horns were completely destroyed by the time the dancing was over.

Each group of big boys preparing for the *mũhĩĩro* series of dances selected one small boy from his own area to be associated with him in the dance. This boy was called a *gĩtamũrũ*, and his task included miming, clowning, and pretending to take lice (*ndaa*) from the bodies of the dancers. His part was a traditional one, the significance of which is no longer known.

The buffalo horns were obtained by the boys either from the *aathi* hunters, or else by going into the forests and searching for places where buffalo had died or had been killed by lion. Many boys actually had to buy the horns they needed, begging their parents to let them have old bits of iron or some goat skins to take to the Kikuyu *aathi* (hunters) or even to the Wandorobo to buy them.

The buzzard or guinea-fowl feathers the boys obtained for themselves by trapping (see Chapter 12). Vulture feathers were mainly (p.401) obtained by collecting them where they had been moulted, but vultures, too were sometimes specially trapped.

The skins of colobus monkey, serval cat, and leopard were either bought from the *aathi* hunters, or obtained by trapping and hunting undertaken by the boys themselves.

Each boy made the wooden armlet and shield for himself if he was clever enough, and if not, he got some friend to make them for him. In either case the boy had to decorate them himself with soot, white earth, and the red paint called *cenga*.

During the practice dances the boys used a thick stick in place of the buffalo horn which was used in the public performance of the dances.

When about a month had passed in practice dances and in collecting the necessary ornaments, the boys arranged for the performance of the first public dance. For this the boys were all fully arrayed in their ornaments and kit. Over the buttocks each boy wore a serval cat or leopard skin, or the goat skin specially prepared to resemble such a skin (*mbithe*), and over the genitalia a small apron of skin. On their arms they fastened ornaments of colobus skin called *mang'ang'ũ*, and on their legs above the knee, strips of white colobus skin called *makenyũa*, and on the ankles black colobus skin called *maruku*. On their ears they wore *hang'i* bead ornaments, and round their faces frills of buzzard and guinea-fowl feathers called *mũhĩĩro*, from which this group of dances took its name. Some of the boys, instead of wearing a *mũhĩĩro*, wore vulture feathers stuck into a leather cap in the form known as *mbũiga*. Those who preferred a *mbũiga* to a *mũhĩĩro* had to have, in addition, two buzzard feathers in the front of the hair sticking upright over the forehead, above the nose.

On the left arm every boy had his special wooden armlet, and in his left hand he carried a *mũhengere* shield. Slung over his back by means of a leather strap, each boy had his buffalo horn, hung in such a way that the open end of the horn was just behind the right elbow. In this right hand each boy held a light wand. Every boy also had a knee rattle called *kĩĩgamba*, but this was carried in his hand on the day of the first public dance, and only put on to his knee at a signal given by the leader of the dance.

When all preparations were ready in any particular territorial unit, the boys arranged to perform the first public dance at one of the bigger homesteads in that area where there was a courtyard big enough to accomodate them all. On the previous night the majority of the boys assembled and went to sleep in a banana grove nearby, while one or two of them were detailed to go and sleep in the homestead, in order to be able to open the gateway (*kĩhingo*) before dawn and let the others in. Early in the morning the boys who had slept in the homestead stole out (p.402) and opened the gates, and the others filed silently into the courtyard carrying their knee rattles so as to make as little noise as possible. Then, at a signal from the leader, they all put them on and started to stamp on the ground and shout, making as much noise as possible.

No member of the village in which the chosen homestead was situated had been warned in advance, and everyone within earshot rushed out wondering if the Maasai had made a raid. They found that it was only the boys of their district, and sat down to watch them.

Mũriyĩri

The dance called *mũriyĩri* was the first in the *mũhĩĩro* series. For this the boys marched round the courtyard twice in single file carrying their buffalo horns in their right hands (having temporarily unslung them from their backs) and their wooden shields in their left hands. Then, forming a circle

facing inwards, they danced the *mũriyĩri* dance to the tune of a song sung by a soloist and his companion who had been appointed to lead the chorus. The words of the *mũriyĩri* varied greatly, one example being as follows:

Mwana ũrĩ ithe, hũũ-hũ !	A child who has a father, *hũũ-hũ!*
Athĩnaga atĩa?	In what way does he have trouble?
Hĩ-wa-ĩ!	*Hĩ-wa-ĩ!*
Nĩũngĩthĩna, na ũ'thĩnie?	Would you have trouble, and cause me trouble too?
Mũtua ngarĩ,	You, who snatched the skins from leopards,
Na wa irũũmi,	And from serval cats,
Thia-thiia,	Move further away,
Ndũkanduĩre ngarĩ icoora!	Lest you snatch the flapping legs of my leopard skin!

Kĩbũiya

Having sung and danced the *mũriyĩri* for some three quarters of an hour, the boys lined up for the *kĩbũiya* dance. For this they arranged themselves in lines of four, six, or eight, according to their number, one line behind the other like a military formation. The horns were slung on the boys' backs again and they proceeded to strike the open ends of these with the light wands which they had in their right hands, at the same time (p.403) stamping their feet which, owing to the rattles on their knees, made a loud rhythmical noise.

After a few days the boys met again in the early morning, but this time at a homestead in another village. After these two public performances in the early morning by the boys of a single territorial unit, they arranged for a dance to take place about two o'clock one afternoon, and invited the boys of one of the neighbouring territorial units to come and join them in order that the tests of skill and strength, which were the real object of these dances, might take place.

On this occasion the dancing started as usual with the *mũriyĩri* dance, after which the boys of each of the two territorial units formed up in two separate companies in lines of four, six, or eight according to their numbers. Then two boys from each company were selected for the first trial of strength and cunning. These four took their places with one in front of and one behind their own respective companies. The trial of strength was called *gũtuana*. The selected boys removed all their heavier ornaments and laid aside their shields and buffalo horns in readiness for action. Meanwhile, all the spectators retired to the extreme edges of the courtyard and into the doorways of the huts, because the exhibition was a rough and tumble affair and anyone who got in the way was liable to be hurt.

The object of each *mũtuani* (participant in the trial of strength; plural *atuani*) was to run round the square formed by the two companies and back to his original position, and at the same time to prevent his opponents from doing so by any means in his power. First, the opposing *atuani* taunted each other and made feinting dashes forward, while all the time looking for an opportunity to make a dash round or to throw one of their opponents and thus get past him while he was on the ground. Suddenly one of the four made a dash, perhaps leaping on to the roof of a granary and down the other side in his attempt to circle the square of dancers. In a flash his opposite number was after him trying to catch him. As the first boy tried to jump on to another granary his opponent caught his ankle, threw him heavily to the ground, and sped on hoping to get round himself, only to be met by the first boy's partner, who was guarding the rear. He tried to dash past him, dodging this way and that like a rugby player, but he was caught and in his turn thrown to the ground. The second boy of the defending company had been waiting for this moment and if he was quick he might succeed in dashing round while the others were busy dodging each other, and before the boy

who originally made the first dash (and was thrown as he jumped on to a granary) had had time to recover sufficiently to defend the position on his side.

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Sooner or later, sometimes within a minute or two, sometimes not for ten minutes or more, one or another of the four boys succeeded in getting round and back to his position, whereupon every member of his company jumped up and down for joy (*rurũkia*) at the same time shouting:

Ĩ-hũ-ĩ-yi-hũ! Hũũya!	*Ĩ-hũ-ĩ-yi-hũ! Hũũya!*
Hĩ! Nĩ mũthoro ũkwaria	Ha! Is it a little boy who is talking
Na ithuĩ?	To us?
Ĩĩ! Wa Rũgũrũ	(naming the Ho! You of Rũgũrũ, district of the defeated boy).
Hĩ! Nĩwĩkĩrĩtwo ndamĩ?	What! Have had bits added on to your garment (to make it longer)?
Ndũkĩĩhumbe!	Put it on then!

The four boys who were engaged in the first trial of strength then donned their ornaments and equipment once more and four more boys took their place. All the while the boys forming the two companies were stamping their feet, making the knee rattles beat out the rhythm of the dance, and at the same time beating incessantly upon the buffalo horns that were on their backs. These trials of strength went on from mid-afternoon until the time when the goats and sheep were about to be brought in to the homestead for the night. Then the dance broke up after a short round of the third dance of the *mũhĩĩro* series, called *hũngũ*.

Hũngũ

The dance called *hũngũ* was the only one of the *mũhĩĩro* series in which the girls took part. The boys broke from their companies and formed a circle facing inwards, and the girls came and stood on the left side of their partners, putting their right arms round the boys' waists, while the boys put their left arms (in which they still held their dancing shields) round the girls' shoulders. In his right hand each boy held his buffalo horn high above his head. Standing thus, the boys and girls danced and sang the chorus, led by the chorus leader and the soloist and both of their partners.

Solo	*Ĩ-hũ-i-yĩ! Mũtũire kũ?*	*Ĩ-hũ-i-yĩ!* Where have you been living?
	Twenjaga wethi na wereri.	We were looking for something (literally, we were digging for searching and wandering—a proverbial expression).
	Wĩhĩteni-ni!	Swear an oath!
	Ndogĩta Wanja,	I swear by Wanja,
	Wanja wa nja o ĩno!	Wanja of this courtyard! (p.405)
Chorus	*Ndogĩta Wanja,*	I swear by Wanja,
	Wanja wa nja o ĩno!	Wanja of this courtyard!
Solo	*Ĩ-hũ-i-yĩ! Mũtũire kũ?*	*Ĩ-hũ-i-yĩ!* Where have you been living?
Chorus	*Tũtũire cianda cia Mbagathi.*	We have been living in the valleys of Mbagathi.
Solo	*Mwenjaga kĩ?*	What were you looking for?
Chorus	*Twenjaga wethi na wereri.*	We were looking for something.
Solo	*Nĩ-mwanona?*	Oh, did you find it?
Chorus	*Twakora wethi wanathama na waturũkia.*	We found that it has moved away and disappeared
Solo	*Wĩhĩteni-ni!*	Swear an oath!
Chorus	*Ndogĩta Wanja,*	I swear by Wanja,
	Wanja wa nja o ĩno,	Wanja of this courtyard!
	Wanjarĩirie wethi na waturũkia!	Who found it for me, but it disappeared!

After the boys of two neighbouring territorial units had danced these three dances for a number of days, the dancing was transferred to one of the really big dancing fields, where the boys of 10 or 12 different territorial units all came to dance and take part in the trials of strength and speed. Here on the dancing fields a great crowd of spectators stood all round the outer edge of the field.

The boys, each in their own companies, first danced the *mũriyĩri* and then lined up in their companies for the *kĩbũiya* and the trials of strength. The field was big, and, of course, there were no granaries to dodge round or jump over. The test this time was more of speed and skill in dodging than of anything else. These trials took place between all the various companies assembled, each company putting forward only its most skilful and speediest boys, who had proved their worth in the earlier competitions with neighbouring territorial units.

At last the trials of strength were over, and all the boys lined up in their companies and stood beating their horns and stamping their feet to make the knee rattles heard loud and far. The boys then vied with each other to break up their buffalo horns by beating them with their light wands. At last they gave this up and formed up for the *hũngũ* dance, in which the girls (who had until now been spectators) joined in for a last big dance before they all separated and went home.

Before departing, arrangements were made to meet in three days on another dance field in some other part of the country, then, after dancing thus about four to six times, the *mũhĩĩro* dancing was brought to an end. Those who were going to be allowed to proceed to initiation went on to dance the *mũũmbũro*, while those who were not went back to the *ngũcũ* dancing once again.

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Mũũmbũro Group of Dances

Towards the end of the period of the *mũhĩĩro* dancing, the big boys who had obtained permission to be initiated got their younger brothers to collect the seeds of wild bananas (*ngobo*) for them, and their sisters to make string for them from *mũgio* bark. When the *mũhĩĩro* dancing was over they quickly set to making their ceremonial belts (*thira*), which were essential for the next dance, *mũũmbũro*, which immediately preceeded initiation. They made the *mang'ang'ũ* of colobus skin which they had been wearing on their arms, into decorations for their *ndorothi* staves (see Chapter 9). They also collected withies of *mũthandĩka*, *mũthũrũriga*, or *mũtei* wood, heated these in a fire, and stripped the outer bark from them, after which they twisted them into hoops, which they slipped over their heads and wore as necklets. Each boy had to have four or five of these necklets (*nuugrua*) on his neck for the *mũũmbũro* dance. They also fashioned earrings from the same withies, making a chain of eight to ten small rings of about 1in. in diameter, which hung from the lobe of the ear.

No boy could prepare and put on these necklets and earrings unless he was definitely going to be initiated that year. If he did put them on and then was not initiated, it was thought that he would die before the next initiation time came round.

In place of the serval cat or leopard skins worn over the buttocks for the *mũhĩĩro* series of dances, each boy now had to make himself a small, heart-shaped apron of goatskin with the hair left on, called *gĩthere*.

When adorning themselves for the *mũũmbũro* dance, the boys covered their whole bodies with a paint made from white saline earth. Having applied this paint liberally to themselves while it was still wet, they scraped it with their finger-tips longitudinally so as to make wavy lines up and down the body (see plate 113 in Routledge, 1910). Round the arms, the paint was similarly scraped with

the finger-tips, though horizontally, while the paint on the face was scraped in a curve from the middle of the forehead in either direction, round the eyes and down the cheeks to the chin. After the white paint had been thus applied, a little red ochre was mixed with water (not with oil or fat), and a line of this red ochre was drawn down the centre of the face from the top of the forehead, over the bridge of the nose, over the tip of the nose to the middle of the upper lip, and then down to the middle of the chin and ending on the Adam's apple.

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On their lower arms they each wore a brass armlet, and on the left arm above the elbow a wooden dance shield (*ndome*), which was used only for the *mũũmbũro* dance. A few boys did not have *ndome*, but wore their *njagua* instead. (See Routledge for illustrations.) The anklets of black colobus fur with white points were still worn, and the knee rattles were also retained. The head was shaved completely, except for a small tuft left in the centre of the crown, to which was attached either three strings with reed stems on them ending in a wild banana seed, or a streamer of white colobus fur (*kamuunge*).

The girls were clothed in their ordinary skin cloaks and pubic aprons, and they borrowed the bead belts called *ciũma cia itina* from their elder sisters or cousins, but apart from these they had no special ornaments, except that they, too, had their heads shaved completely except for a little tuft, to which they attached three strings with grass stems threaded on them ending in banana seed beads. This was an outward and visible sign that they were candidates for the initiation ceremonies which were to follow the *mũũmbũro* dancing. A few boys and girls who were not actually going to be initiated that year were allowed to take part in the *mũũmbũro* dancing (but without the proper ornaments and accoutrements), in order that they might act as leaders and instructors to the next year's *mũũmbũro* dancers.

Each dance shield was decorated by its owner according to his own fancy, or, if he had inherited it from an older brother, the boy could retain his brother's pattern, for the decorative scheme did not have to be the same for every boy, and was not equivalent to the insignia of the age-group that was painted on war shields by warriors. At the top of each dance shield was fastened a small metal rattle (*njingiri*), so as to make a pleasant jingling noise when the shoulders were moved rhythmically during the dancing.

In the left hand almost every boy carried the staff or insignia (*ndorothi*) which has already been described. In the right hand he carried a leather strap attached to a short wooden handle, like a whip (*mũkayo*). These whips were used by the boys to whip each other during the *mũũmbũro* dancing. The whipping was a part of the training in stoicism that was considered necessary for a Kikuyu boy who was going to be initiated. Some of the boys, instead of carrying their *ndorothi* staves, carried a strung bow and a quiver, but the quiver, instead of containing arrows, carried parched sorghum corn to be eaten when hungry. The quivers served the useful purpose of protecting their wearers' backs from the blows of the whip.

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Practising for the Muumburo

The boys and girls who were preparing for the *mũũmbũro* danced first in small groups in their own villages so as to acquire skill in the movements of the dance. Then, when the date for initiation had been fixed "for the end of the moon", that is, about three weeks before the actual initiation time came, those boys and girls who had been taking part in the *mũũmbũro* practice dances, but

who were not going to be initiated, had to drop out, and only those who were going to be initiated went on to dance the *mũũmbũro* in public.

The *mũũmbũro* dance was danced in the courtyards of the larger homesteads. All the boy initiation candidates from a wide area assembled at one such homestead to dance in the evening, and they then all spent the night there as guests of the inhabitants. Next morning very early they went to dance at another homestead, and danced there until mid-morning. Then they moved on to a third homestead and danced until about midday, after which they separated and went to their homes for food and rest.

During the first week or so of this public dancing the candidates had a whole 24 hours rest between these bouts of dancing, but as the day for initiation came nearer, they danced every evening and every morning till noon, thus becoming fit and strong and physically ready for the ordeal of initiation.

There were two distinct divisions of the *mũũmbũro* dance, the first part being called simply *mũũmbũro*, while the second was known as *mwĩthigo*.

Mũũmbũro Proper

When the dancers assembled, the boys and girls formed a big circle, the boys facing inwards and each girl to the left and in front of her partner, facing outwards and holding him round the waist. The boy, with his *ndorothi* in his left hand, put his left arm round the girl's shoulder, and in his right hand held his leather whip. In the middle of the circle the boys chosen as soloist and chorus leader took up their positions. No girl partners accompanied them, for in the centre of the circle the boys were to fight each other with their whips to prove their bravery, and it would have been dangerous for the girls to be within range.

Once the circle had been formed and the singing and dancing had started, one boy separated himself from the dancers and his partner, and (p.409) went into the arena armed with his whip and his *ndorothi* staff, or his bow. He started dancing in the centre of the circle on his own, and challenged anyone of the other boys to come and oust him. Presently, some other boy left the ranks of the dancers and dashed in, and a fierce fight with whips ensued. If the boy who was the challenger was not ousted, and if he also failed to oust his opponent, they both stayed in the circle together. Then if any other boy wanted to go in to the centre and dance, he had to undertake a battle with both the boys. Sometimes as many as five or six boys would end up in the arena, having beaten each other mercilessly with their whips, without any one of them succeeding in ousting the others; more often, however, one boy would hold the ring successfully for four to five bouts, after which he got so tired that he was forced out.

Every now and then a party of boys and girls who had been delayed on their way would arrive to find the dancing and fighting in progress. Then those already dancing would stop, the girls would run for shelter to the outskirts of the courtyard, and the boys already in possession of the dancing site would jointly fight the late arrivals with their whips until they tired. Then the dance circle would be formed once more and a fresh lot of boys took up the fighting in the arena.

The fighting was all carried out in a perfectly friendly spirit, but without compassion. If a boy could not stand the punishment he was receiving, all he had to do was to return to the circle of dancers, where he could not be touched. To take refuge there, however, was a sign of weakness, and such a boy would never become a leader in the new age-group that would be formed at the forthcoming initiation ceremonies.

At intervals, when the boys and girls were tired of dancing and fighting, they stopped and rested, and were refreshed with food and gruel supplied by the women of the homestead where the dancing was taking place. If these women did not supply enough food, the boys were entitled to enter the huts, look for more, and take it forcibly. This rule was directly contrary to all custom and was in the nature of a special dispensation. Moreover, if the boys found a group of elders roasting meat they were entitled to take it from them forcibly, even beating the elders with their whips. At such a time the initiation candidates were allowed to do all kinds of things which were forbidden to them normally. Indeed, they gloried in doing so, boasting that the elders would hasten the arrangements for their initiation time if they were pestered sufficiently.

The following is an example of the words sung to the tune of the *mũũmbũro* dance.

Ĩ-yi-ũ-ũ! Ĩĩ rĩu, na rĩrĩa	*Ĩ-yi-ũ-ũ!* Oh, now, and when
Twainaga ngĩrũa!	We use to fight duels! (p.410)
Irĩ gũthũkĩra.	The boys are ready.
Ndikũmunda	I am not prepared
Kũũraga ndũgũ.	To kill friendship.
Ndigacoka	I will never again
Gũcirĩra ngĩrũa.	Think of fighting a duel.

Mwĩthigo (also called *Mũrimũũtho*)

In the evenings, when the *mũũmbũro* was drawing to a close, it was normal for the boys and girls to go into some of the women's huts to dance the *mwĩthigo* dance. Only the boys actually danced this dance, while the girls watched. It consisted chiefly of jumping up and down and stamping on the ground, and it was really only a means of showing off their strength. The only song connected with the *mwĩthigo* dance was sung just after they entered the hut, before the dancing itself began:

Maitũ, ndutĩra	Mother, get out for me
Karĩa ũigĩire	That little portion that you have put by
Mwana.	For the child.
Mwana ndaraaraga	A child does not sleep
Ituri igĩrĩ.	On two bellies.
N'aarĩ kagwacĩ,	If it should be a little sweet potato,
Nguru ndĩũragia.	The tortoise won't argue about it.
Ndakuonga ndang'i,	I suck your thighs,
Kũrĩa	Where
Ũitagĩrĩria	You spill
Mĩruru.	Blood and foetal waters.

The woman then answered:

Baba, iyũkiani irio,	Father, receive ye food,
Mũtikaĩ kũndoga.	Lest you should cast a spell upon me.

She then gave them food, which they ate before they danced the *mwĩthigo*.

If there were no unmarried, initiated girls living in the hut and sleeping in the girls' room, the dancers and their partners then crowded into this bedroom to sleep, while those who could not squeeze in lay on the floor of the living room of the hut. The girls and boys slept all together, and they were allowed to "cuddle" each other, but in no circumstances might the boys attempt to have sexual intercourse with the girls, for this was utterly taboo, and in this respect the law was not relaxed. The boys and girls had in fact all been warned that if they did so they would suffer when the days of initiation came, because their wounds would not heal properly.

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***Matuumo* (*also called Ūrĩgũ*)**

On the day before the circumcision operation was to take place, and the initiation ceremonies were to begin in earnest (see Chapter 16), all the boy and girl candidates and all their relatives and friends assembled at the homestead which was to be the centre of the ceremonies in their district. On this day a number of different dances took place, some by the warriors and initiated girls, some by boys and girls who had been initiated and were in the novice stage, and others by those who were candidates for initiation on the next day.

For the moment, we are concerned only with the dance of the initiation candidates themselves, which was called *matuumo*. For this dance the boys all wore necklaces and ornaments of various kinds lent to them by the young warriors of their families, and in addition they still retained their *ndorothi* staves and their *thira* belts, but apart from their ornaments they were completely naked. The girls, too, were naked, except for innumerable strings of beads and cowrie shells which had been lent them by their elder sisters and cousins.

For a part of the time the girls danced alone, surrounded by the women and girls who were among the spectators, and their own dance was called *ũrĩgũ* (uninitiated girlhood), but it was all a part of the general dancing known as *matuumo*. It was intimately associated with the initiation ceremonies and it will not therefore be described here, but some of the songs of the *matuumo* dances may appropriately be given in this chapter. They were sung by the spectators and not by the dancers.

The women and girls sang to the girl dancers as follows:

Nĩũngĩkarĩra?	Will it happen that you will cry?
Nĩ itereba	It is supporting
Ndĩragũtereba	That I am supporting you.
Nĩũngĩkoina	Will it happen that you will break
Mũtiiri na ngoro?	Your sponsor with your chest?

The young warriors sang the following song to the boys:

Mũriũ, kĩhĩĩ,	My son, you big boy,
Ndora ũ'menye.	Look at me and know me.
No niĩ	It is only I
Ngagũikara	Who will sit
Na mũhuro.	Behind you.
Rora rũgũrũ!	Look to the north!
Mũrũme-guo	Your husband (p.412)
Riũa	The sun
Rĩgĩthũa	Has just set
Ndirĩ wa nyũkwa	I am not your brother
Kwaroka gũkĩa	When the sun rises tomorrow
Wĩrathanĩre.	The responsibility will all be yours.
Nĩũngĩkoina	Will it happen that you will break
Mũtiiri na ngoro?	Your sponsor with your chest?

Both men and women also sang the following song to the girls and boys:

Nĩikũgurara !	They will be wounded!
Itirĩ ndĩĩri	There is no putting it off, now that
Mĩtĩ ya mbũri	The goats and sheep
Ĩgĩitagĩrĩra!	Are going out to graze! [i.e. it is morning.]

Initiates' and Novices' Dances and Songs

The Waine Song

After the initiation candidates had actually been operated upon while they were sitting round the fires that had been lit for them, the warriors sang the following song to the boys.

Kahiũ wandema	Little knife, have you cut me
Ta itũgũta?	As if you were clearing bush?
Twanarũngara,	We have straightened out,
Nake mũtiiri	And the sponsor
Akĩrũngara.	He too has straightened out.
Kahiũ ka ngurumo	The little knife of the rocky valley
Nĩ Maathai.	Is like the Maasai.
Ngĩruma arũme	When I used to abuse adult men
Ndioĩ kahiũ	I did not know that the little knife
Kanungaga arũme.	Smells of adult men.

All the while the boys chanted a sort of chorus:

Ĩ-ũ-i-yũ! Na rĩrĩa twarĩ kĩanda-ĩ,	*Ĩ-ũ-i-yũ!* And when we were down in valley. Oh,
Ĩĩ-kĩanda-ĩ.	Yes, down in the valley.

The same song was sung to the girl initiates by some of the older girls while they, too, were warming themselves by the fire.

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The Waine Dance

This was danced only by boys and girls who had been initiated but who had not yet passed out of the novice stage into full warriorhood or maidenhood.

There was no special attire for the *waine* dance; novices merely wore the ordinary dress of the novitiate—a long cloak of soft, brayed leather for boys and girls alike, similar to the cloak worn by initiated women (*nguo ya maribĩ*), but tied not only at the shoulder but also at the waist so as to hide from prying eyes the operation wounds that were still healing. The boys did not wear much in the way of ornaments at this time, being content with a few bead necklaces, *kĩnyata* collar, and perhaps a *ngaguana* (beads on leather) on the right arm. The girls, on the other hand, were adorned with a great variety of necklaces and ornaments, including beaded head-dresses (*ciũma cia mũtwe*), leather belts decorated with beads and cowrie shells (*mĩtotia*), and necklaces made from the tops of gourds (*mĩmbũthũ*). They also wore *thima* flowers in their hair. Every boy and girl carried three wands (*mĩcee*) given to them when they were operated upon (see Chapter 16).

The boys and girls who had been initiated together went about in a band during their period as novices, and they danced the *waine* dance here and there to amuse themselves and pass the time. In dancing this dance they did not normally have spectators, and even if they went and danced on the *matuumo* day at a place where some other initiation was in process, they had to dance a little apart from the main gathering.

For the *waine* dance the novices formed up into a circle, and as far as possible stood alternately: boy, girl, boy, girl, and so on. As, however, they were seldom in exactly equal numbers, and as no one else could join them to make up equal numbers of the sexes, this arrangement could not be strictly adhered to, and it was more usual to find that one part of the circle was all boys or all girls. In certain years when no boys were initiated, the *waine* dance had to be danced by girls alone.

The circle having been formed, a boy and a girl broke from it and entered the arena, still beating time to the song with their wands, while all those forming the circle also continued to do so, and

went on singing one of the *waine* songs. The boy and girl in the arena then walked slowly across the ring till they faced those on the other side of the circle, and then turned round and walked slowly back to their place. Boys or girls who had no partners went in alone when their turn came (for every person in turn had to enter the ring). Never did two boys or two girls go in together.

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When pairing off as partners (where there were boys and girls together), it was the girls who chose their partners, and they took care to choose boys whom they considered to be brave and who were not to suffer the ignominy and shame of being *gũĩrũo* (mocked because of cowardice), which was really the chief object of the dance. As dancers in turn entered the ring they were watched, and as soon as a boy entered it whom the others had reason to believe had shown fear or flinched at the operation, a signal was given, and as the unfortunate youth reached the centre of the ring, all those forming the circle suddenly dropped to their knees, stopped singing, and burst out laughing, while they sang the following verse.

Ĩ-hũ-i-yũ! Ĩ twarĩ kĩanda-ĩ,	*Ĩ-hũ-i-yũ!* Yes we were in the valley,
Nĩmũkuona ũyũ?	Do you see this one?
Nĩwe woigire,	It is he who said,
Kahiũ,	Knife,
Wandema ta itũgũta?	Do you cut me as if you were clearing bush?

If the person so treated was not really a coward, he got angry rushed at the circle with his wands and there was a free fight. Sometimes this fighting was fierce—there were cases in which boys were killed as a result—but usually after a scrap they stopped, the circle reformed, the dance started again. The ordinary song, other than that sung when the coward entered the ring, was the following:

Ĩ-hũ-i-yũ! Twarĩ kĩanda-ĩ,	*Ĩ-hũ-i-yũ!* We were in the valley,
Ĩ-hũ-i-yũ!	*Ĩ-hũ-i-yũ!*
Ĩ-hũ-i-yũ! Mwaiguire atĩa?	*Ĩ-hũ-i-yũ!* What did you feel?
Ĩĩ, twaiguire no ngerecwa	Yes, we felt only the grating
Ya mwĩrĩ na kahiũ	Of the flesh and the knife
Ikĩrĩana.	As they bit into each other.

The novices went on dancing the *waine* dance until the last initiation ceremony of the year was over. Then and only then did they go through the ceremony of *gũthiga* and pass into the status of full adult members of the tribe. It thus happened that those who were initiated early in the season danced this *waine* dance for much longer than those who were the last to be initiated, who probably danced it for only a week.

Warriors' and Maidens' Dances and Songs

After the girls and boys who had been initiated passed out of the novitiate state and became warriors and maidens, they were still not allowed to (p.415) start publicly dancing the dances of the warriors and maidens. First of all they had to pay recognised fees to the senior warriors and maidens for the right to participate in dances such as the *gĩcukia*, *mũgoiyo*, etc. The procedures connected with the acquisition of such dancing rights are given in Chapter 18.

Gĩcukia

The *gĩcukia* dance was danced only by warriors and initiated girls. The reason for this dance started at the time when the *ngũcũ* dances of the boys and girls were in progress, and it lasted until after the bulrush millet harvest was over.

At the beginning of the season it was danced only at night, by moonlight, and never by firelight. Each territorial unit had its own dance, which took place in one of the courtyards of the bigger homesteads. After about six weeks of dancing thus by night, arrangements were made to have the *gĩcukia* danced by day on one of the big dancing fields, and when this happened warriors and maidens came from a number of territorial units to dance together, and there were always a great number of spectators.

Once the *gĩcukia* had become a daylight dance performed on the dancing fields, it was held every third day, and on each occasion the dancing field of a different territorial unit was chosen as a rendezvous, so that those who had had to walk far for the first daylight dance had the next one near their own home, and so on.

For the *gĩcukia* dance the correct attire for men was as follows. The hair was dressed in the form of long ringlets extending well down the shoulders as shown in the frontispiece of Routledge's book (1910), but as it took a year or two for a warrior to grow hair of this length, not all of them had it thus. For those who had shorter hair it was fashionable·to have a large number of split vulture feathers fastened to the hair so as to hang down behind like long hair.

In the holes pierced in the upper cartilage of the ears it was customary to wear *hang'i* bead earrings, and in the distended lobes the ornaments called *rĩtiena* (rings with bits of chain hanging from them). Round the neck was worn an iron collar with pendants (*mũrumbo*), or else a *gĩthioro* (a wide collar of *ngũnyi* beads). On their arms the men wore iron or brass bracelets and *ngaguana* (armlets of leather decorated with beads), and also, if they possessed them, the ornaments known as *ngotho* (an ivory armlet with horns like a *njagua*) and *haco* (a peculiarly shaped armlet [p.416] made of buffalo or rhino horn). On the leg below the knee they wore brass ornaments and also the colobus monkey fur ornaments known as *maruku*. Round the waist was worn either the *mũnyoro* belt (decorated with beads and chains) or else the *mũgathĩ wa itina* (a simple string of beads), and in addition to this, every warrior had the belt to which the sword was attached. On their ankles the men had to wear the ankle bells (*njingiri*) which sounded out the tune as the men moved their feet.

For clothing, the men went to the dances wearing their skin clothing (*ithii*), but when actually dancing the *gĩcukia* these were discarded as were their spears and shields. The only covering a man had was a *gĩthere* (a shield-shaped piece of goat or calfskin) over his buttocks and a small bunch of leaves over his genitalia. The whole body was liberally covered in red ochre mixed with fat.

The girls were dressed and ornamented as follows. On their heads they wore the bead head ornaments known as *ciũma cia mũtwe*, while the round circle of hair on the crown of the head was liberally anointed with ochre and oil. Each girl had many *hang'i* earrings, and in the lobes of ears the wooden rings known as *ndebe*. Round the neck the girls wore bead necklaces and the gourd necklaces known as *mĩmbũthũ*, while they had, if possible, *kĩnyata* beaded collar with a pendant *ikenye* disc (made of sea shell or ostrich egg shell). Round the waist they had their bead belts (*ciũma cia itina*), and often in addition to this they had a *mũtotia* or *maitai* cowrie belt. On their arms they wore iron and brass ornaments as well as *ngaguana* (leather armlets with beads on them) just above the elbows. Below the knees, too, they had coils of iron or brass wire, round their ankles the iron wire ornaments called *ndogonye* and *nyarũrũng'a*. On the fingers most girls had a large number of copper rings.

Their bodies were liberally rubbed over with red ochre and fat, their faces were usually decorated by tattoo marks. Often, too, petal brightly coloured flowers were stuck on to the middle of their cheek as added decoration. In their hands the girls carried a bunch of *muondwe* leaves.

For clothing the girls wore their ordinary garments—cloak, skirt, apron—but those who could get hold of them substituted a *gĩcoco* decorated pubic apron, for the *mwengũ*, or ordinary one, since it is considered more attractive. The cloak and skirt were liberally covered with red ochre. The bunch of leaves was usually carried in the hand, but was sometimes tucked into the arm ornaments. If a girl had long enough hair she had it done in little plaits hanging in a fringe down to the nape of the neck like bobbed hair.

To dance the *gĩcukia*, the men formed a big circle facing inwards and (p.417) the girls came into this circle and selected their partners for the first round of dance. Every girl had complete liberty to choose whoever she liked as a partner, provided that she did not choose a near relative, a man she was betrothed to, or a man who was her lover. If a girl found that the man she wanted to dance with already had a partner, she could either join in and become a second partner, or else she could choose another partner for the first round of dancing, and hope to get the man she wanted for the second dance, for at the end of each round every girl had to choose a different partner, and no girl might, in any circumstances, dance twice running with the same man.

If any men had two partners, and others none at all, the one with two was entitled to call over one of those who was partnerless and offer him one of his two partners, but the girls had the right to refuse and could insist on both dancing together with the same man, in which case the man without a partner either stood out or danced all by himself. When every girl had selected her partner, the master of ceremonies gave a signal and each couple prepared to dance.

In preparation for the dance the girls slipped their cloaks off their shoulders, so as to leave their breasts and backs bare, and then tucked the upper part of the cloaks into their skirts to prevent them hanging down too low and getting in the way. The men then placed their hands on the girls' shoulders, and the girls put their hands on the men's hips, and so they held each other fairly close with the girls' breasts brushing the men's chests as they danced. If a man had two partners to dance with, they had to stand close together with one arm round the other's waist, and the other hand on one of the man's hips. The man then put one hand on a shoulder of each of the two girls.

In the *gĩcukia* dance the soloist and the leader of the chorus were always girls, and the two who had been selected to lead the dance for the first round then left the circle and entered the ring with their partners. These two men held the soloist and the chorus leader by the little fingers while the solo was being sung, and then during the chorus they took up the usual dancing position already described, until the chorus leader gave a signal, at which point every man let go his partner and they all jumped up and down to the tune of the chorus, making their bodies quiver. The chorus ended with a clapping of hands in a special manner, and then the soloist resumed again. The singing of solos by the girls in this dance was called *gũthuuthĩra*, as was the men's singing in the *ngurũ* dance, but the more common word for singing a solo part was *gũkũya*.

The usual theme of the *gĩcukia* songs was the deeds of valour of the warriors, and the girls sang their praises in light, improvised verse to the recognised *gĩcukia* tunes. Sometimes the words of one particular song (p.418) would be used again and again for many dances, but more often improvised, sung, and forgotten.

After dancing one round, the circle broke up and the dancers rested. When they reformed the circle, the girls had to choose fresh boys. Normally, for the second and third rounds the girls were expected to choose partners from among the men whose homes were in parts of the territory distant from their own homes, and not from among personal friends.

After three rounds came the time for refreshment. The men and girls living within reasonable distance of the homestead where the dancing was taking place had arranged for their mothers to bring food and gruel, and each of them now invited some of the men and girls from the further villages to join them. This was called *kũgwata rũra* (offer refreshment).

After they had eaten, the fourth round of the *gĩcukia* dance was dance was danced, and then the party broke up and the people went to their various homes to sleep. It was absolutely taboo to dance more than four rounds.

At every *gĩcukia* dance there was a master of ceremonies (*mũtongoria*) who was responsible for seeing that order was maintained and that there was no talking and whispering during the dances. If he found any couples talking or whispering he was at liberty to strike them with his staff of office.

After the *gĩcukia* dance had been danced by the members of different territorial units separately for some few weeks whenever there was enough moon, the *njama* of the *gĩcukia*, which was a commune of eight men who were responsible for dance arrangements over a wide area, appointed a day for the first daytime *gĩcukia* dance, and they selected the dance fields where it was to be held. Here the young men and maidens from a great many territorial units met for a very big dance and the girls were expected to choose their partners for the second and third rounds from men of territorial units other than their own. When it was time for refreshments, after the third round, these were always provided by the parents of men and girls of the territorial unit where the dance was taking place. After one, more round the party broke up and everyone went home.

The *gĩcukia* dance, whether danced by moonlight or by day, was a means of letting the girls and men get to know each other, and at these dances, the girls decided whose lovers they wished to be, the choice resting normally with the girls. When the dance broke up and the men all started homewards, the girls accompanied the men whose lover they were, or wished to be, to their *thingira* (men's huts), where they slept together in the form of restricted intercourse known as *nguĩko*. Sometimes (p.419) a man had two or more girls as lovers simultaneously, and they slept with him together.

In their songs of praise, the girls referred to the warriors by special terms. A man who had gone raiding and brought back cattle was called *mũtua-njaũ*, one who had brought back goats and sheep was *mũtua-ndari*. One who had killed a Maasai enemy and brought back his sword was called *mũtua-rũhiũ*. One who had brought back a Maasai shield was *mũtua-ngo*. A man who had brought back a quiver was *mũtua-thiaka*, while one who had brought back a Maasai girl was *mũtua-ndũiyĩ*. A man who came back from a raid with only the ear ornament of a Maasai was *mũtua-irithi*, and if a warrior brought back a pair of Maasai sandals he was spoken of in song as *mũtua-nyamũga*.

Mũgoiyo

The *mũgoiyo* was danced only after the long rains were over and when the maize, *njahĩ* bean, and pigeon pea crops were well on their way to maturing. It was always danced at night, and in no circumstances could it be danced by day. Moreover, it was never danced when there was

moonlight, but only by the light of special fires built for the purpose, and the girls were responsible for collecting the necessary firewood and for bringing it to the selected place for the dance.

In the opening days of the *mũgoiyo* dance season, this dance was held in the big courtyards of large homesteads, but later, arrangements were made for several territorial units to combine in a big dance, and it was organised on a specially cleared piece of ground in the entrance area of one of the bigger villages. For a big dance as many as five large fires were lit in a circle, and, for a small dance, three.

In most respects the ornaments worn for the *mũgoiyo* dance were the same as those for the *gĩcukia*, but the men wore no clothing of any kind, not even a bunch of leaves over the genitalia. On their legs, instead of *maruku* of black colobus monkey fur, they wore *thaba* of long white colobus fur. They anointed their bodies with red ochre mixed with oil in the manner called *ndoibi*. Their legs, however, were not anointed with red ochre, but with white saline earth mixed with water, so that the white colobus fur should not be spoilt. Moreover, for this dance the warriors held their spears in their hands and only laid aside their shields.

The girls were attired and ornamented exactly as for the *gĩcukia* dance, save that their cloaks were thrown over their shoulders (instead of being tucked in at the waist), leaving their breasts and abdomens quite (p.420) bare to be pressed against the chests and abdomens of the warriors but ensuring that their backs were protected from the pressure of the spears.

For the *mũgoiyo* dance the men formed a ring round the space where the fires had been lit, but they faced outwards, with their backs to the fire. The girls each chose their partners, and in this dance no man could have more than one partner, because the nature of the way in which they had to hold his partner precluded this. If a girl could not get the partner she really wanted, she had to go and partner some other man; she would not sit out. If there were more men than girls, the men left over without partners waited on one side till that round of dancing was over, and then they came into the circle and other men stood out. If, on the other hand, the girls outnumbered the men, the surplus girls chose the men they wanted as partners for the next round of dancing and stood near them thereby "booking" the next dance.

The *mũgoiyo* dance was, unblushingly, a sexual_dance_pure and simple. Each girl stood on her partner's feet so that her own feet were right off the ground, and she held her partner tightly round the waist so as to dance close to him as possible. The man stuck his spear into the ground behind the girl's buttocks and then held it against her back with his right hand thus using it to support her close against him. The man's left arm went round the girl's right shoulder, and also holding on to the spear, with her bare breasts and abdomen close against his.

There were always two masters of ceremonies, who had torches lit from dry banana fibre, and if they saw anyone whispering or in any way behaving as they should not do, they thrust their torches into the fires and then pushed a lighted torch into the offender's bare back. If the offender resented this harsh treatment and tried to show fight, all the other warriors would set on him for spoiling the dance. The master of ceremonies were placed one inside the ring and one outside, and the one on the outside of the circle was expected to keep the spectators in order and stop them from chattering or making any noise. For each round there was a male soloist and a male chorus leader, who took their places inside the circle accompanied by their partners, but they did not adopt the dancing embrace except while the chorus was being sung, or during the "silent" interludes when the dancing consisted of body and shoulder movements only, to the accompaniment of grunts from

a man chosen to stand on the roof of one of the nearby huts and grunt out the rhythm. He was called *mũruma* (one who roars or grunts).

A girl, in selecting her partners, had to avoid any close blood relations and all lovers, and, of course, any man she was betrothed to. The *mũgoiyo* dance was always danced for four rounds only, with intervals for rest and (p.421) and refreshment, and then the dance broke up and the girls who had been separated from their lovers joined them and went home to their huts to sleep.

Often after dancing the *mũgoiyo* dance with a warrior a girl would decide to be his lover, and would then accompany him home, but she could not then dance with him the next night, as she had become his lover.

While the moon was young the dance was danced night after night, but as soon as the moonlight increased, all *mũgoiyo* dancing stopped until the moon waned.

After dancing in small groups in the bigger courtyards for some weeks, the leaders of the warriors could decide to arrange for bigger dances to which men and girls from a wide area would come. When the *mũgoiyo* dancing had reached this stage it was danced only every fourth day, and in a different territorial area each time. The arranging of a dance of this sort was called *gũthokia mũgoiyo kwa* ...(to plan *mũgoiyo* dance at someone or other's home).

At a *mũgoiyo* dance a warrior would occasionally produce a sun-dried clay doll, which he had made for the special purpose of producing at the dance to create a sensation. The doll was made to represent a small boy or small girl, and never had breasts indicating a grown female, nor emphasised male genitalia. It had no religious or ceremonial significance and was not an "image held up for worship". Its only object was to create a diversion and a stir, and to attract the attention of the girls to the man who had made and produced it. In South Kikuyu the doll was also sometimes produced at a *gĩcukia* dance, when it was danced by day, and at *kĩbaata* dances.

In Routledge's book (1910) such a clay figure is well illustrated and he suggests that as an image. It was seen by Routledge at dances where all the men were wearing curious ornaments made of maize sheaths and leaves. This was a dance which did not occur in South Kikuyu, and which in North Kikuyu was called *ngurũ ya irĩma* (the *ngurũ* dance of the hill country). It was in no way like the *ngurũ* proper.

Mũcogo

This was in all respects the same as the *mũgoiyo*, except for the tunes to which the songs were set and the nature of the chorus. Like the *mũgoiyo*, the *mũcogo* was a sexual dance.

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Ndiiri

This dance was in vogue up to the time of the great famine (1898-1899) and was never again danced seriously. It was danced during hot weather at the time of the *njahĩ* bean harvest, and then it continued intermittently up to the time of the bulrush millet harvest. The warriors and maidens danced it on the *matuumo* day (the day before circumcision operation).

The *ndiiri* dance was exclusively a daylight dance, and it was not danced in the same year as the *mũgoiyo*. If the warriors decided to do *ndiiri* dance for the hot season at the end of the long rains, they would not have the *mũgoiyo* dance that year at all, but postponed it until the same season of the following year. The *ndiiri* dance was never danced on the dance fields, but only in the bigger courtyards.

A day and a place having been fixed for a *ndiiri* dance, the participants arranged a rendezvous at some nearby stream. The men went to one part of the stream and the girls went further down the same stream to get ready for the dance.

The attire worn by the warriors was the same as that for the *gĩcukia* except that the men actually wore their calf skin cloaks (*ithii*) instead of laying them aside. The whole body was anointed with red ochre, with oil, and an especially large amount was put on the hair, if it was long so that it could be made to splash all over the face and chest of the partner while they were dancing.

The spears used in this dance were not fighting spears, but the handled, short-headed type called *kĩberethi*, for the fighting spears, that is, the Maasai type were still rare, having only recently been adopted from the Maasai. The warriors carried their spears while they danced, and at the opening of the dance they also carried their shields.

The girls were clothed and wore ornaments similar to those of *gĩcukia* dance, but they did not bare their breasts, as the dance was not danced in close embrace, but with the man and his partner standing a little apart.

When all the warriors and girls had assembled at the rendezvous and were ready for the dance, the girls were sent on ahead to the home where the dance was to take place; here they lined up in a wide circle round the courtyard with the spectators behind them. Then the warriors formed themselves into a company and advanced in formation to the homestead, hiding behind their shields and brandishing their spears as they approached the homestead entrance, one warrior broke from (p.423) the others and rushed into the courtyard brandishing his spear and jumping up and down in the peculiar fashion known as *kũrũũga ndũũgo*, which the Kikuyu warriors practised so much. Having proceeded thus to the middle of the circle of girls, he stood still, brandishing his spear so violently that he broke the wooden handle. If he succeeded in doing this he was hailed with ululations in praise of his strength. Whether he succeeded or not he turned round and returned to his companions as he had come, and another warrior rushed forward and executed the same manoeuvre. Only warriors of renown (*njamba*) had the right to perform this *pas seul*, and then the whole company of warriors came into the courtyard, laid their shields by the granaries, and prepared for the dance proper.

For this the men formed a circle facing inwards, and then the girls entered the ring and chose their partners, whom they faced so that they had their backs to the centre of the ring. Two girls could partner one man in the same way as for the *gĩcukia* dance. Each girl rested her left hand on her partner's sword handle, and her right hand on his right hip. The man placed his left hand on the girl's right shoulder lightly, while in his right he held his spear aloft, gripping it by the small iron furrule at its base. For each round of dancing, two warriors entered the ring, and they had either to be from different territorial units or of different age-groups. They were not accompanied by their partners, nor did they take their spears, but instead they carried bundles of short sticks, one of which they would rest on the ground to emphasise each point that they made in their songs.

The songs, which were sung by each soloist in turn, sometimes in the form of question and answer, sometimes in the form of a recital, recounted the deeds of valour performed by the members of the singer's territorial unit or his age-group. The dancers forming the circle did not sing any chorus but instead they kept up a series of grunts in a definite rhythm, to which they swayed their bodies. At the end of the recital by one of the two soloists all the dancers jumped up and down grunting, and the men shook their heads so as to make their mops of long hair come round and strike their partner's cheek first on one side and then on the other. A girl who, by the end of four rounds of

dancing, had not had at least one partner whose hair was long enough to treat her in this way was laughed at.

After the two soloists had been reciting for some time they advanced to meet each other in the middle of the ring, and solemnly shook hands. Then the dancers all jumped up and down more wildly than ever, and that round then came to an end. After a rest, the circle was reformed, the girls chose fresh partners, two new warriors entered the ring to sing the praises of their unit or age-group, and so the dance proceeded.

p.424
Sometimes, and more so in some districts than in others, the soloist would not only sing the praises of their companions, but would mime the deeds of valour that they were recounting in their saga.

The dances usually started at about mid-afternoon and broke up after four complete rounds of dancing, just when the goats and sheep of the homestead were coming in for the night. The men and girls then all went home, the men being accompanied by the girls who were their 1overs and who would spend the evening in the young men's huts.

The principal object of the *ndiiri* dance was not sexual, but rather to stir up the younger warriors to go and fight the Maasai. Warriors participating in the dance who heard men on all sides being named for their bravery, and yet were not mentioned themselves, felt so ashamed and so shunned by the girls, that they took the first opportunity to organise a raiding party or to join in one that was going out to attack and raid the Maasai. My informants told me that it was not at all unusual for the warriors who were not mentioned by name in the *ndiiri* dance sagas to go off and cry like children.

The *ndiiri* dances went on until the March rains started and made them no longer possible. The usual procedure was for the *ndiiri* dance to be danced every eighth day at a different village, but only two or three territorial units combined for these dances, which were never on a really big scale that was common during the later stages of the *mũgoiyo* dance.

Sometimes, at *ndiiri* dances, the best known warriors formed a small minor circle within the major circle of the dancers, and they danced there with their partners, but this was not a general practice. The *ndiiri* dance was an exceedingly popular one, and always attracted big crowds of the warriors' relations who wanted to hear what the other warriors would say about their own men.

Ngurũ

This dance was one of the two which were restricted to males only and was mainly an opportunity for the warriors to show off their dancing skill and their fine physique, and thus make the girls want them as lovers or as future dancing partners.

At the same time, the *ngurũ* dance served as a preparation for war and raiding, by bringing warriors of different territorial units together so that they could get to know each other and combine better in war on the Maasai.

p.425
The normal time for the *ngurũ* dancing to start was at the end of the long rains when the maize and *njahĩ* beans planted at the beginning of those rains were ready to be eaten green, and it lasted until the time of the harvest. It was argued that during the main rainy season there was little chance of the Maasai attempting raids into Kikuyu country, and thus there was no need for warriors to be well organised, for the Maasai hated crossing flooded rivers and streams and moving through long

grass and bush when it was rain-soaked. Similarly, the Kikuyu did not like going raiding into Maasai country during the rains, as in wet weather they could be tracked more easily, and it was far from pleasant having to sleep out in the open in tropical rain.

As the rains drew to a close, however, the time for raids and counter-raids approached, and it was then that the elders of each territorial area made a habit of giving the warriors bullocks for their meat feasts, with which the *ngurũ* dances were intimately associated. The elders argued that it was well worth while to give the warriors these meat feasts and so encourage the *ngurũ* dancing, as this always led to the warriors going out raiding, and by this means the Kikuyu cattle stock was replenished.

As these warrior meat feasts were such an important part of the *ngurũ* dances, we will give further details here about them, but the reader must refer to Chapter 8 for an explanation of the way in which this meat was divided.

The warriors' meat feasts were usually held in the bush, and there they built themselves a number of booths or temporary huts. If there was a large cave nearby this was used in preference to huts, but caves were few and far between in most parts of the country. Meat feasts, however, had to take place near running water, and so were always held near streams.

The warriors attending these meat feasts were accompanied by some of the older uninitiated boys, who acted as their "fags" and in return were given some of the meat. Each such boy was sent to perform this task by his father, because the old men wanted their sons who would soon be initiated get an insight into the customs connected with these meat feasts and the *ngurũ* dances. Each such boy brought with him a ram as a contribution to the feast from his father.

Every warrior who went to one of these meat feasts (which lasted for a number of days, sometimes up to and even over a month) took with him his spear, shield, sword, and war equipment, for since the feasts were held when the rains were over, a Maasai raid might take place at any time, and the warriors had therefore to be ready to respond to the war cry at a moment's notice.

Normally two or three elders would attend the warriors' meat feasts (p.426) and have a both to themselves. They went in order to superintend the cutting of the slaughtered animals, to supervise the making of tonic broth (*thathi*), and also to take charge of the boys who stayed behind to help in general tasks while the warriors were away by day dancing *ngurũ*.

The animals for the feast, however, were never slaughtered while warriors were out dancing, as it was an essential part of the feast that they should drink the fresh blood from these animals so as to grow strong. (For details of how the blood was obtained see Chapter 8).

No warrior participating in any meat feast might sleep anywhere other than at the site of the meat feast, and he might not on any account have any close contact with girls at this time of training. The two or three elders, too, had to sleep at the site of the feast and abstain from all contact with their wives.

Every day while the meat feasts were on, the warriors from every feast in the area went off to dance the *ngurũ* dance, which was more in the nature of military exercises than a dance in the European sense of the word, although to the Kikuyu it ranked as a dance.

In preparing themselves for the *ngurũ* the warriors washed off all red ochre and anointed their bodies and hair with nothing but mutton fat rubbed in thoroughly until their bodies glistened in the sun. For dress, they wore a small leather buttock flap (*cũrũri*), and in front of the genitalia a bunch

of *kĩgombe* grass. The hair was dressed in the long twists and curls, and on to those were threaded bits of thatch grass stem called *thage*, or else little bits of sorghum stem. To the front hair they attached *hũtĩ*, the red seeds of the *mũhũtĩ* tree. Round the chest and back they wore the feather cloak known as *matere*, while round the ankles they had *maruku* (black colobus monkey fur with white points). To the right knee was attached a knee rattle (*kĩĩgamba*). On the arm they had *ngaguana* (leather armlets decorated with beads) and *haco* (peculiar armlets made of buffalo or rhino horn), and in the cartilage of their ears many wore *hang'i* (rings of beads on wire), while the lobes were fitted with *icũhĩ cia rĩtiena* (earrings with bits of brass wire attached). Most warriors had a string of *ngũnyi* seed beads round the chest, this ornament being called *ngũnyi cia ngoro*, and many of them also wore a *maitai* belt of cowrie shells which was girded on the chest instead of the waist. In the right hand, every warrior carried a small staff to which was tied a a long streamer of white colobus monkey fur (*muunge*). Round the waist they wore their *mũnyoro* belts made of leather and decorated with beads and chains, together with their sword belts with swords attached. When setting out for the dance they carried their shields in their left hand but spears were never taken.

p.427
The warriors from each meat feast arranged beforehand where they could meet each day, and when all were assembled together, they matched off in single file for the first homestead at which they intended to perform. They were followed by a large gathering of boys, girls, and women, and also by those warriors of the district who could not participate because they were not having a meat feast.

No girl might speak to any of the warriors participating, nor approach them, nor might any woman or girl utter *ngemi* ululation of praise.

Having arrived at the homestead where there was a big courtyard, the warriors first marched round and round in single file, still carrying their shields. This was called *gũcoora*. They walked with a curious stiff step which made the knee rattles sound out loudly, and all the time two warriors who had been detailed for this work stood in the middle of the courtyard singing songs of praise, and of the various deeds of valour performed in the past by their companions. This was called *gũthuuthĩra*. They went on marching round until all the knee rattles were in perfect time with each other. When this was achieved, after two or three circlings, they stopped and lined up in lines of four, which was called *kwara maraare*. In lining up thus, care had to be taken that the four men forming the first line and the four forming the last line were the most skilled in the art of *gũthoitha*, which consisted of marching with a curious jumping step. When they were lined up, the soloists started singing the praises of the various warriors who had excelled in deeds of valour, and then the chief soloist suddenly waved his streamer of white monkey fur round his head crying, "*Nĩ rĩu! Nĩ rĩu!* ('It is now! It is now!'), and at that signal every warrior started to do the jumping step, marching forwards in columns of four, as they did so. Then they about faced, marched back, about faced again to the centre of the courtyard, and stood while another solo was sung. While *thoitha*-ing, the head and shoulders were jerked and shaken in such a way as to make the hair and all the long streamers (*mĩtũnyi*) that were attached to their feather cloaks wave in the breeze. A *mũtũnyi* consisted of strings to which were threaded little beads made of lengths of porcupine quill alternating with the red seeds of the *mũhũtĩ* tree, and bits of tree fern stem. There were usually six of these streamers, three on either side of the feathered cloak behind each shoulder.

If the warriors were planning to make a raid on the Maasai very shortly, they also wore in their hair little "hoops" made of *mũthandĩka* or *karare* wood. But they did not wear these unless they

were planning to go on a raid very soon after the meat feasts were over, because, having once put these hoops in their hair they could not again sleep with their lovers unless, and until, they had first been on the projected raid and had come back victorious.

p.428
After dancing at one homestead for about an hour, the warriors took up their shields and marched off in single file to some other big courtyard where they performed as before.

While having meat feasts and dancing the *ngurũ*, no man could have the hair of his temples shaved by any initiated girl or woman, but only the older uninitiated girls who had not reached puberty. Nor could he be offered any food or gruel made by any girl or young married woman but their own mothers could make gruel for them and send it to them in the charge of a young, uninitiated girl.

After dancing thus in the courtyards of the various homesteads for a week or two, the warriors arranged to have some much bigger, public performances of the *ngurũ* on the dance fields. Messages were sent to the *ngurũ* dancers of other areas, making an appointment for all to meet at a given field on a set day, and here the *ngurũ* manoeuvres were performed by 200 or more warriors together. Then, before separating for the night they would arrange to meet again next day on another dancing field and would go on doing this for a number of days, until the meat feast drew to a close.

When these big dances on the dancing fields were organised, the women and girls of the area prepared much gruel and food for the warriors, and this they were allowed to consume in the intervals, when they paused for rest, but before doing so, they had to withdraw from the field and sit by themselves. Only young, uninitiated girls could carry the gruel and other foods to them where they were sitting, and, as before no woman or initiated girl might speak to them or approach them.

By custom, the warriors had to send some of the food and gruel brought to them to the elders who had come to watch the dance, and this was called *rũra* (refreshment) for the elders.

No warrior who had not danced the *ngurũ* before could participate in the public performances of this dance until he had paid a special fee called *ndũrũme ya macaga* (a ram for ornaments), which was over and above the fees which every new warrior had to pay to the senior warrior for the right to dance the *mũgoiyo*, *gĩcukia*, and other dances.

The *ngurũ* dancing was brought to a close by a big final *ngurũ* dance after which the warriors returned to their meat feasting places, slaughtered and ate one more ox, and a ram called *ya gũita ngurũ* (for bringing the *ngurũ* to an end).

On that final day the warriors had red ochre brought to them at the meat feasts. There they mixed it with fat and, as soon as they had eaten the last bit of meat, they anointed themselves with it, took off the special *ngurũ* ornaments, and resumed normal life as warriors.

Unless they had arranged to go off raiding at once, they now started (p.429) joining in on the *mũgoiyo* dancing which had been in full swing for some time, being danced by those warriors who were not meat feasting and dancing the *ngurũ*. Coming straight from the meat leasts, these warriors were great favourites with the girls, as they were strong, sleek, and very fit.

If, on the other hand, a raid was planned and the warriors had been wearing the *mũthandĩka* hoops in their hair, they then sent their leaders to consult with the diviners to find out appropriate days and places for starting their raiding expeditions.

Kĩbaata

This dance, like the *ngurũ*, was danced only by the warriors, and it, too, was more in the nature of a military exercise than a real dance. It always had one of two main objects: either it was organised in order to bring the warriors from a wide area together so that they could discuss plans for defence and for raiding the Maasai, or it was held in order to get all the people of the different areas to come together to hear some important pronouncement by the senior elders of the tribe.

Just as the *ngurũ* dance served to acquaint warriors of different territorial units with each other in preparation for raiding during the dry season between the long and short rains, so the *kĩbaata* dance was connected with similar preparation for the other dry season. On the other hand, if the warrior classes, for instance, had decided that it was time to close the ranks of the major age-group to which they belonged, and to prevent initiations of boys for nine planting seasons, they would arrange for *kĩbaata* dances to start, and at these they would inform the elders of their decision, and the elders would announce the decision to the people as a whole. Similarly, if the elders wished to take steps to find out what had happened to missing goats and sheep, or if they wanted it to be known that they were putting a wholesale curse on cattle thieves, etc. *kĩbaata* dance was organised, for it provided the surest way of assembling all the people. Or again, if the elders made a new law affecting all the people, it was at a series of *kĩbaata* dances all over the country that this law was published. The dancing of *kĩbaata* dances was, in fact, always connected with a definite political, social, or military purpose; it was never danced simply for pleasure or for the spectacle it provided.

A series of *kĩbaata* dances could be organised and carried out at any time of the year if an urgent need arose, such as real danger threatening (p.430) from the Maasai, but in the ordinary course of events it was danced only about a month or six weeks every year after the bulrush had been harvested, but before the long rains had set in in earnest. Important decisions of the elders and of the warriors were usually held over for "publication" until this time each year, because at other times of the year it was not really convenient to have *kĩbaata* dances, as they would interfere with other activities.

When arrangements were made for a *kĩbaata* dance, ample notice was always given. It was held at one of the big dancing fields, and one dance having been danced thus, it was usual for further dances to take place all over the country.

The day for a *kĩbaata* dance having been fixed, the warriors made a rendezvous at a river or stream near the appointed field. They came to the river accompanied by their girl friends, who helped them carry their kit, and who would be given charge of their ordinary clothes while the dancing was in progress. The girls were expected to bring gruel and other foods with them for the warriors to eat while they prepared themselves for the dance.

For the *kĩbaata* dance the warriors did not mix their red ochre with fat, but they did make a paint of white saline earth mixed with water. On their faces they rubbed dry red ochre powder over one side of the brow and cheeks, and white *ira* powder over the other. The line *thongo* dividing the two halves of the face was also made with red ochre. The warriors handed their clothes to the girls and their spears to young boys to carry for them, and then donned the appropriate garments and head-dress for the dance.

Their hair was covered with *ngaranda* (tight-fitting skin cap) and then *gĩtukũ* (feather head-dress), or *thũmbĩ* (head-dress of lion's mane or baboon skin), or some form of war head-dress such as *mũhĩĩro* ostrich feathers (as distinct from the buzzard feather *mũhĩĩro* of boys). Some men had

vulture feathers tied to their hair in place of these other forms of head-dress, and as far as the head was concerned, there was no uniformity. Round their shoulders they wore a *riba* (vulture feather cloak), and each man wore his ordinary neck ornaments. On their arms the warriors wore *ngaguana* (beaded armlets), *mĩkang'a* (iron wire armlets), and *gĩcango* (brass armlets). On the left arm they might wear *haco* (a peculiar armlet of buffalo or rhino horn) or *ngotho* (a horned ivory armlet), according to which they possessed. In their ears they wore *hang'i* (beads on wire) and *icũhĩ cia rĩtiena* (earrings with bits of brass chain attached), while round the waist was worn the sword belt with sword and sheath, and also a *mũnyoro* (belt decorated with beads and chains.

No skin covering was worn on the buttocks, but a few leaves (p.431) worn over the genitalia. The legs were decorated with *maruku* and *thaba* of colobus monkey fur, and on the right leg a *kĩĩgamba* knee rattle was attached. Round the neck every warrior wore a special cloth ornament (*rerai*) made from cotton cloth obtained by trade from the Akamba. The *rerai* was like a poncho, and it was used exclusively for the *kĩbaata* dance and for warfare. Cotton cloth was so highly valued by the warriors for making these *rerai* that they gladly paid a goat or ewe for half a yard.

When the warriors were ready they sent the girls and boys ahead of them to the dancing ground with their cloaks, spears, etc. and here the girls and boys took up their positions to watch the dancing. The normal arrangement was for the elders to be at the head end of the field, the women on one side of it, the girls on the other, and the boys on the end from which the warriors would enter the "arena".

When all was ready the warriors approached the field in single file carrying their shields in their left hands and a *thiarĩ* club in the right hand. Thus armed, they marched round the fields in a kind of "march past" to show themselves off to all the assembled people. This was called *gũcora*. This done, they went to one side of the field and laid their shields down in two parallel lines, the tip of each shield touching the tip of the shield on either side of it. The warriors then formed columns of four (or six or eight according to how many were present), each carrying only his *thiarĩ* club. Having lined up thus, they proceeded to perform exercises and evolutions known as *gũthoitha*. The most skilful performers were placed in the front and the back rows, so that they might keep the whole company in time and prevent anyone from getting out of step (*kũbacia*).

There was no master of ceremonies, and there was no singing by the warriors; the girls among the spectators, however, chanted the following words all the time:

Kinya! Kinya!	Tread! Tread!
Kinyĩrĩria ũbuthi thĩ.	Tread all the arrogance into the ground.
Kinyaga ũguo,	Tread always thus,
Wathaka cia Mbũi,	Gallant men of Mbũi,
Wathaka cia Njirũ,	Gallant men of Njirũ,
Wathaka cia Njikũ,	Gallant men of Njikũ, etc. naming each of the nine main clans in turn.

While the warriors were marching round in single file, one warrior blew on the war horn (*coro*) to give the time for the step, but when the *thoitha*-ing (jumping step) started, the time for the step was given only by the knee rattles of the leaders and by the chanting of the girls. The step used in dancing the *kĩbaata* has been described by Routledge:

> From the flat of one foot they spring to the flat of the other, all the while remaining in a crouching attitude. Their bodies simultaneously sway (p.432) forward; the next moment the elbows are thrown vigorously backwards: at the same time the head is violently jerked back, and the face thrown upwards. . . . The muscular exertion is excessive, . . .(p. 184).

When at length they tired, they sat down in the middle of the field, and the women and girls placed food and gruel on the ground beside them. The girls and women then retired after saying, "*Ka rũra*" ('here is refreshment'). The warriors then set apart some of this gruel and food and instructed some of the married women to carry it over to where the elders were sitting. Two warriors went over with the women and said to the elders, "*Nĩtwamũgwata rũra*" ('We offer you refreshment').

After the pause for refreshments, the dancing was resumed with another march past, followed by the same evolutions and movements all over again. During one of the pauses, the elders and warriors all assembled the middle of the field and the announcements and business of the day—whatever they might be—were conducted. In this chapter, however, we are not concerned with that aspect of the *kĩbaata* dance.

When the dancing was over the warriors handed over their feather cloaks, poncho-like neckwear, and other special *kĩbaata* ornaments to the girls, who in turn handed them their ordinary garments, and also red ochre all ready mixed for use with fat or oil. With this they anointed themselves so as to remove the saline earth and yellow war paintm and then they went off to their respective homes with the girls.

Kaarĩ

Any warrior who succeeded in killing an enemy in war or on a raid expedition had to have his hair shaved off when he came back, and for the space of about a month he went about from one homestead to another where he had friends or relatives singing the *kaarĩ* song and which the following is an example.

Ũ-ũ-ũ-ũ-yũ!	*Ũ-ũ-ũ-ũ-yũ!*
Ngĩthĩnjĩrũo-ĩĩ,	While animals were being slaughtered for me,
Gĩtete aranyuagĩra	The little beer gourd from which he drank
Kĩanaikio	Has been thrown
Na rũthuĩ rũa njaũ.	Into the calves' enclosure.
Thiire nja!	I went into the courtyard!
Mũka ũrĩa na muugi-ĩĩ,	That woman, the one who gave (the alarm)
Nĩonire rũheni	Saw the flash
Rũa itimũ.	Of the spear.
Maitũ, njugĩra ngemi.	Mother, ululate with praise for me. (p.433)
Nĩ niĩ ndoigagĩrũo mbu	It was I for whom the alarm was given
Nĩ mũka ũrĩa	By the woman
Ũrĩ maitha.	Who is an enemy.

Details of the ceremonies and purifications involved in connection with *kũina kaarĩ* are given in Chapter 24.

Elderly People's Dances and Songs

Mũthũmũ

This dance was the predecessor of the one known as *mũthũngũci*, and it was a dance of old men and women who had already had their children initiated. It was danced by the old men and women of the *Kĩnyanjui*, *Ng'ang'a*, *Wainaina*, and *Njoroge* age-groups when each was old enough to dance it. It was abandoned by the *Mbũgua* age-group when their turn came, and they substituted the *mũthũngũci*. There was no Kikuyu living in 1939 who had danced the *mũthũmũ*, but a few of the very old men remembered watching it when they were young warriors, and the information below is from their account.

The men usually wore soft tanned leather cloaks called *nguo cia maribĩ*, and on their arms they wore *mũrĩnga* and *mũthanga wa matemo* (ornaments made of coiled wire). Round their necks were bead necklaces made of the big blue beads called *mũirũngũ*. On their heads they wore a peculiar head-dress, made from a gourd fragment cut to fit the forehead, and often covering the eyes, with holes cut for seeing through. Attached to this mask were ostrich feathers. The neck was also decorated with *kĩrago* beads made from the roots of various rushes and sedges, and round the waist was worn a leather *mũnyoro* belt with long chain tassels quite different from those of the warriors. In their ears the men had *icũhi cia rĩtiena* (earrings with bits of chain attached) and also *hang'i* (bead brings on wire). On their legs they wore colobus monkey fur (*maruku*) and (*njarai*). They wore their swords, too, for this dance. Bows and arrows were carried when going to the dance assembly but were laid aside for the actual dancing.

The women had their garments well greased with castor oil and fat, and they wore a very wide leather belt ornamented with cowrie shells (*gĩtahũ*), which was like a wide *maitai*. They had *hang'i* earrings and necklaces made of beads called *mũgathĩ wa mũcogu*.

p.434
The men formed a circle facing inwards and the women took their places on the inside of the circle facing their partners, whom they chose for themselves. They were not allowed to choose a husband, near relative, or relation-in-law as a dance partner. The dance was always danced on the dancing fields by daylight, and all the young people of the area came to watch it. There was a soloist and chorus leader in the middle of the ring, and the dance is said to have been rather like *gĩcukia*. In one of the movements each male rubbed his partner's cheek with his own, first on one side and then on the other. To facilitate this, old men with sunken, hollow cheeks would fill them out by putting solanum berries (*ndongu*) into their cheeks to make themselves look younger. The words of the chorus, as remembered by some of my informants who watched this dance in their youth, were as follows:

Ĩ-hũ-i-yũ!	*Ĩ-hũ-i-yũ!*
Nĩ niĩ ndaunangire	It is I who broke down
Makoigo	The *makoigo* branches
Maarĩ ngurumo	That were in the rocky valley
Ya Mathioya.	Of the Mathioya River.
Haya, haya, ĩ-ha!	*Haya, haya, ĩ-ha!*

While singing this chorus the men stood a little apart from their partners, and then drew them into close embrace for the solo, at the same time making movements with the body, shoulders, and head in perfect time to the tune of the solo. When the chorus was reached again, they separated and sang it all together, using wooden hand clap (*ngongoro*) to beat the time.

Mũthũngũci

When the age-group known as *Mbũgua* had had some of their children initiated, and so became eligible for the *mũthũmũ* dance, they decided not to dance it, but instead invented a new dance to take its place, and called it the *mũthũngũci*. Like the *mũthũmũ*, this dance was danced only by day on the big dance fields, and it was danced only in about one in seven years or more. It was always started by the Kikuyu of the northern end of the South Kikuyu area, that is, at Wawerũ wa Kahũhũ's, and before starting, the elders there all had meat feasts to get themselves into condition. Once the *mũthũngũci* started in that area, the territorial unit nearby started having meat feasts, and then they, too, took up *mũthũngũci*. The dancing spread, in the course of a year or two, right (p.435)

across Kikuyu country. By the time the elders in the Kabete and Dagoretti areas started it, those who had initiated it had already stopped.

For this dance the elders borrowed ornaments of various kinds from the warriors and from their daughters. They had their hair done into short twisted plaits in the form known as *matumbĩ*. To this hair they fixed vulture feathers well greased and carefully arranged to simulate the long hair of the warriors. On their legs they wore white colobus monkey fur (*thaba*) and round the waist a *mũnyoro* bead and chain belt. For clothing the men tried to get cotton cloth from the Akamba traders, and made this up into cloaks which they covered in red ochre. Failing this, they used the soft leather cloaks called *nguo cia maribĩ*.

The women, too, borrowed ornaments of all kinds from the girls and younger women, to supplement their own ornaments, and they wore new and well greased skins. On her head each woman always put a young girl's *ciũma cia mũtwe* (bead head-dress), and round her waist *ciũma cia itina* (a bead belt).

The dance was danced in a circle, the men on the outside facing inwards and the women inside the circle facing their partners. The women chose their own partners for each round and could not choose husband, near relative, or relation-in-law. The way in which the men held their partners was the same as for the *gĩcukia* of the young people, in fact, except that the songs and tunes were different, the *mũthũngũci* was like *gĩcukia* in every way. No man or woman ever danced *mũthũngũci* for more than two seasons in their lives, but while the dance was on it was danced at frequent intervals all over the territories where it was being held. It was always accompanied by beer drinking, meat eating, and general feasting, in this being quite different from the young peoples' dances. One of the *mũthũngũci* songs was as follows:

Haya! Hĩ-hĩ-i-yũ!	*Haya! Hĩ-hĩ-i-yũ!*
Nĩtũcoge ithuerĩ,	Let us sing and dance together,
Mũcogo	So that the dance
Ũthire inegene.	May have no more quarreling.
Wanyũmbĩire maitũ;	You made love to my mother;
Ngũũmba mwarĩ,	I make love to her daughter,
Akarakara.	And she gets angry.
Haya! Hĩ-hĩ-i-yũ!	*Haya! Hĩ-hĩ-i-yũ!*
Nĩtũcoge ithuerĩ,	Let us sing and dance together,
Mũcogo	So that the dance
Ũthire inegene.	May have no more quarreling.
Gwitũ nĩ ta kwanyu.	Our home is as your home.
Ndĩ kagondu nduagĩra,	I have a little lamb, for whom I pick fodder,
Ndigĩirũo nĩ baba.	That my father bequeathed me.

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Women's and Girls' Dances and Songs

Gĩtiiro

There were two "dances" in the Kikuyu sense of the word which were essentially women's dances, but they could hardly be called dance in the strict sense, being more in the nature of songs accompanied by some dancing and much pantomime. The first of these, *gĩtiiro*, was normally a part of the protracted ceremonies connected with marriage.

The *gĩtiiro* was danced on three different days in connection with every marriage that was arranged in accordance with normal procedure. The details of the dancing and of the play-acting connected with it are given in Chapter 19, and need not therefore be repeated here, but the words of some of the songs may be given to indicate the nature of the dance and song. The first was one of the songs sung by the female relatives of the bridegroom in praise of him, and challenging the bride's relatives to show that the bride was worthy of him. It ran as follows:

Kahĩĩ nĩ magothe,	A little boy is something wonderful,
Nĩ tondũ kahĩĩ	Because a boy
Nĩ igiri rĩa thome,	Is the fence at the entrance,
Rĩtathuthĩkaga.	Which never breaks down.
Nĩ ũndũ kahĩĩ	Because a boy
Gatirĩ handũ	There is no place to which
Kangĩendio.	He will be sent away in return for marriage payments.
Na mwarĩ-guo	And your daughter
Nĩngatuga	I shall give presents to
Kũngĩ.	In another place.
Nĩngũgũra	I will make marriage payments for her
O na kĩndũ kĩrĩa	With whatever
Ũngĩnjĩtia,	You ask me for,
O na kĩ! O na kĩ!	Anything! Anything!
Kĩndũ ndĩĩrirĩiriĩ	That which I long for
Gwaku,	From your house,
Ndingĩtiga.	I will never leave behind.
Ngũgũra o kũgũra,	I will indeed make marriage payments for her
Nĩ ũndũ mwarĩguo	Because you
Ndũngĩakĩra.	Will never build a hut for your daughter. (p.437)

The bride's relatives then sang the following answer:

Raba	(My daughter's) pubic apron
Ndingĩhota kwendia	I cannot accept marriage payments for,
Nĩ ũndũ nĩ wa thĩna	Because of the trouble she has caused,
Nĩ ũndũ wa ng'aragu	And because of the hunger
Yũkaga.	That occurs.
Ningĩ nĩ ũndũ	And also because of
Wa thĩna na ng'aragu	Trouble and hunger
Na wa gũikaraga	And the long time spent
Gĩthaka	In the bush
Ngĩtuagĩra nyeni.	Picking spinach for her.
Ningĩ ndanathĩna	Also I had much trouble
Na kũrera	Rearing
Mwana ũyũ na mwĩrĩ	This child in my body
Hĩndĩ ya ihu,	When I was pregnant,
Na ndieonaga	And I could not see
Kĩnena.	My *mons veneris.*
Kĩndũ kĩngĩtũma	Anything to make me
Ngwenderie	Accept marriage payments from you for her,
Hatirĩ kĩndũ gwaku.	Does not exist at your home.
Ndingĩtiga kĩmwe!	I will leave nothing there!
Mũkwa ndendirie	The carrying strap that I sold
Na ng'aragu,	In time of famine,
Mũrĩnga ndendirie	The wire ornament that I sold
Na ng'aragu	In time of famine
Mũndũ wĩtagwo	The person called

Kĩnya	A *kĩnya* gourd
Kĩoragirũo nĩ ũyũ,	That this daughter broke,
Ũkũmwenda	Whom you desire
Nĩũkũrĩha.	You will have to pay for.

Nduumo

The other women's dance was that called *nduumo*, which was not at all the same as the dance known by that name now. The original *nduumo* was a girls' dance which they danced after they had feasted on the gruel and other food supplied by the young, newly initiated girls who wanted to be accepted into the company of the older girls.

The girls who attended these feasts dressed in all their finery as for a *gĩcukia* or *mũgoiyo* dance, and often they would go on to one of the mixed dances after dancing the *nduumo* on their own.

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The accompanying feasts took place in secret in the bush and well away from the homesteads, but the dancing, which took place on the day after the feast, was in one or other of the big courtyards of the neighbouring homesteads. The dance was danced only by the senior girls, but the young, initiated girls came to watch and to learn, and then they went off by themselves and practised it.

The *nduumo* was always danced in public and was watched by old men and women, and also by the warriors, but the latter had to watch from a distance. In spite of this, the warriors went to the scene of the dance all dressed up in their best finery, because they hoped to catch the eye of girls after the dance was over and so get them as lovers.

For this dance the girls formed a wide circle facing inwards, and then in turn two girls at a time would enter the ring and dance an elaborate *pas de deux* to the time set by the singing and clapping of the girls forming the circle. The following is an example of a song sung at a *nduumo* dance:

Ĩĩ werũ ũyũ nĩ mũraya!	This plain is very extensive!
Ndinangania icunjĩ.	Cut it up in pieces for me.
Mwarĩ wa ithe,	Daughter of her father,
Rika thĩĩnĩ.	Go inside (the circle).
Watuuwo matũ, ngwĩre.	When you cut your ears, I will tell you.
Ndũrĩ na njaũ ĩrĩ nda	You have no calf in your stomach
Ũkũgiria ũrũũge.	To prevent you from jumping.
Baba nĩ mũtua cira	My father is a judge
Na niĩ ndĩ mũtua nduumo.	And I am one who dances the *nduumo*.
Baba akĩinũkia rũũa,	My father brought home a skin,
Na niĩ nĩngũinũkia	And I will bring home
Nduumo.	The *nduumo*.

Music

It is commonly stated that the Kikuyu were an unmusical people, and the absence of real musical instruments in their culture was held to be a proof of this. Kikuyu music was however, of the vocal type, and it would be unfair to say that they were not musical because they could not European hymn and song tunes reasonably, for this was due to the fact that their whole tonal scale and conception of time was different from that of Europeans.

The vast number of Kikuyu tunes and the perfection of their rhythm (p.439) is a proof that they had, in fact, a good ear for music of the type which they recognised and appreciated. In quite a

number of cases, Kikuyu songs were planned so that the solo and part of the chorus were being sung simultaneously to different tunes, which were so arranged that they harmonised.

The Kikuyu had no musical instruments in the strict sense of the word, but the following noise instruments may be listed here.

Instruments

Coro

Horns of kudu, oryx, etc. were used as war horns and in connection with the *kĩbaata* military manoeuvres and dancing. An imitation horn was also made of the wood of the *mwatha* tree and used in the same way as the *coro* horn.

Mũtũrirũ

This was a piece of bark pulled off the stem of a plant in the form of a tube. It then had two or three holes cut in the side to form a simple flute. It was used by herd boys to produce simple, plaintive tunes.

Kĩĩgamba

These were the metal knee rattles used to give the time in such dances as the *kĩbũiya*, *ngurũ*, and *kĩbaata*.

Njingiri

These little ankle bells were used in dances such as the *gĩcukia* and *ndiiri*.

Ngongoro

Wooden hand clappers were used for the *mũthũmũ* dance.

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Sticks

In the *waine* dance the accompaniment was made by beating the time with one stick or wand on two other ones.

Ngũri

This was a whistle made from bushbuck horn, but as it was used only by hunters (*aathi*) to enable them to keep in touch with each other while hunting, it can hardly be called a musical instrument.

Kĩmeme (*also called Numĩ*)

This was a "bassoon" used by women at the initiation dances. It was a single length of hollow bamboo about 2in. in diameter and blown from one end to make a booming sound.

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Chapter 12 – Hunting and Trapping

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Introduction

As we have already seen in Chapter 4, there were three different groups of people to whom the term *aathi* (hunters, or rulers) was applied. There were the Wandorobo, whose survivors are still to be found in small settlements in the forest behind Kijabe. These people probably belonged originally to a race speaking a language of their own, but through long contact and intermarriage with the Kikuyu they have become half-Kikuyu, using both that language and their own. The Ndorobo *aathi* were hunters, and did not practise agriculture at all in the period with which this book is concerned, but they owned and ruled big tracts of forest. The second group of people called *aathi* were the owners of big estates taken over from the Wandorobo, who derived their title from the fact that they had replaced the Ndorobo *aathi* as owners and rulers of the land. Finally, there were individual Kikuyu *aathi* (often men who had some Ndorobo blood in their veins due to their Kikuyu grandfathers or fathers having married Ndorobo girls) who had abandoned agriculture for hunting and trapping, or who combined the two modes of life. These men and their families, by the nature of their life, had to abandon the normal Kikuyu taboos against eating the flesh of wild animals, and the methods of hunting and trapping which will be described in this chapter, are, in the main, those used by that section of the Kikuyu people. In addition, however, it must be remembered that many uninitiated Kikuyu boys were fond of trapping certain birds and animals, while warriors and ordinary Kikuyu elders would, and did, attack and kill animals that were dangerous to themselves or to their flocks.

Usually those who took up a hunting life started as poor men with little in the way of stock or property, but in the course of time many of them became rich through selling buffalo hides (for shields) and ivory. Even when they became rich it was seldom that they completely abandoned their hunting and trapping life, although often their sons preferred to return to agriculture as a livelihood. If they did so, they again took up the Kikuyu taboos against eating the flesh of wild animals.

Those Kikuyu who adopted a hunting mode of life had their children (p.442) initiated by Kikuyu custom and not by Ndorobo custom, for they did not differ from the other Kikuyu as far as law and custom were concerned, except for the fact that they would eat wild meat. The Ndorobo *aathi*, on the other hand, differed from the Kikuyu in all their customs, and they often retained these differences after intermarrying with the Kikuyu. It is therefore important to keep the three different kinds of *aathi* quite distinct in the mind, and to remember that in this chapter where the word *aathi* is used without definition, it refers only to members of the Kikuyu hunting families.

These *aathi* were, in fact, specialists like the smiths or wire workers but in other respects were normal Kikuyu. Quite apart from the fact that they became hunters because they wanted to do so, and made it a means of obtaining food, they were of great value to the Kikuyu as a whole, and served a useful purpose in the economic organisation of the tribe. In the first place, they provided the tribe with many essential requirements, such as the hides of buffalo and giant forest hog for making war shields. They also provided hyrax, blue monkey, and other skins for making the much sought after fur cloaks for the senior elders. They could be called in to trap porcupine, baboon, and other vermin that were threatening crops, and they obtained ivory which they bartered for brass, copper, and beads, which they then sold to the other Kikuyu in small quantities.

The hunting grounds of the Kikuyu *aathi* were quite different from those of the Ndorobo *aathi*, which, as we have seen in Chapter 4, emphasises the fact that each tribe recognised the claim of the other in landownership.

The Kikuyu *aathi* were occasionally owners of an estate which had been bought from a Ndorobo family, but more commonly they were tenants-at-will (*ahoi*) on the estates of other Kikuyu. Their hunting grounds were, for the most part, those estates on which they were settled as tenants, and their principal trapping grounds the gardens and fields bordering the forest and bush areas.

Every Kikuyu estate owner, or landowning family, was anxious to have several *aathi* tenants, who would trap the various kinds of wild animal that raided the fields, such as buffalo, pig, bushbuck, monkey and baboon. In addition to this, however, those Kikuyu *aathi* who had no hunting grounds in their own right did a good deal of poaching in the hunting grounds of the Wandorobo, and they were often involved in fights with these people.

In the following pages, the chief animals hunted and trapped by the Kikuyu will be listed, with an account of the methods used.

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Mammals

***Njogu* (*Elephant*)**

The forest country which lay round the borders of Kikuyu country, especially in the Kijabe region and on the fringes of the Aberdare Range, was full of elephants. Herds of these animals would from time to time come down and raid the Kikuyu cultivation, or would invade forest areas that had been bought from the Wandorobo with a view to clearing and cultivation. When this happened the *aathi* would quickly organise an elephant drive (*iguĩma*). For this purpose they would enlist the help of a number of Kikuyu warriors, whose task would be to drive the elephants to the places where the *aathi* were waiting for them. Those helping in the drive would be under the guidance and control of one or two *aathi*, while the rest of the *aathi*, armed with their elephant spears (*maheti*), would take up their positions in the branches of big forest trees along the line across which the elephants were to be driven. These elephant spears were in reality more like weighted harpoons, and they had metal heads which were carefully poisoned. From their points of advantage in the branches of the trees, the *aathi* dropped these weighted harpoons on to the backs of the elephants, aiming for the point between shoulder blades.

The poison which the *aathi* used was not nearly as powerful as that used by some other East African tribes, and it was normal for an elephant that had been harpooned to travel from four to eight miles before it succumbed. Every hunter always marked his harpoon heads with his own special marks (*rũũri*—a sign or mark), and once a man had used up his harpoons on the elephants that were driven past his station, he would proceed to follow up the animals he had succeeded in piercing, accompanied by some of those who had taken part in the drive.

The wounded animal would almost certainly make its way into territory owned by the Wandorobo, and would die there, but the Wandorobo would not normally dispute the right of the Kikuyu *aathi* to follow and take the ivory and meat from an elephant which had a hunter's harpoon head in it. As hunters themselves, they recognised the hunting laws that gave every man the right to follow wounded game into someone else's territory.

If, on the other hand, the Wandorobo found the Kikuyu *aathi* actually initiating and carrying out a hunt in their territory, there was a dispute and probably bloodshed.

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As soon as the hunters came upon a dead or dying elephant the first thing they did was to examine the mark on the harpoon head and call witnesses to verify the ownership of the tusks. Having done that the owner of the harpoon climbed up on to the dead animal, and sitting on its body, he sang "the Song of the Elephants" (*Rũĩmbo rũa Njogu*). The tune was a fixed one, but the words were usually improvised and accompanied by a refrain that everyone knew.

This song having been sung, the hunter cut off the tip of the animal's trunk (*gĩoko*), took it into the bush, and carefully buried it, or hid it under the bushes. Only when this had been done could the man and his companions set to work to cut out the tusks. These tusks (*mĩguongo*) had to be most carefully removed, because it was regarded as a serious matter to damage the "nerve" at the base of the tusk. This nerve (*gĩkono*) was supposed to be left attached to the animal's skull, the tusk being drawn out in such a way as to leave it intact. To damage the nerve wilfully was tantamount to bringing a severe curse upon one's own head. If the nerve was by accident broken off and remained inside the root of the tusk it had to be left there to rot. On no account would it be withdrawn once it had been severed from the skull. After this, before cutting up the flesh, the *aathi* always cut off the breasts of the elephant and hid them in the bush; no meat could be cut off the carcass until this had been done. They then cut up the elephant's carcass, removing as much meat as they could carry, or needed, as well as every scrap of the fat. This fat was of great value, and even the ordinary agricultural Kikuyu would barter goat skins and food for a little of it, owing to its supposed medicinal value for women in childbirth. The tail hairs of the elephant (*ngore*) were of no value and were always left behind.

When the tusks had been removed, they were carried to the homestead of the man whose harpoon had killed the elephant. Tusks would not be taken into a homestead, however, without the prior performance of certain important ceremonies.

When the party carrying the tusks came near the entrance to the homestead, the hunter would send for his father, or if his father was dead some man who stood in the classificatory relationship of father to him. This man would come bringing with him a ram, which had been slaughtered before either the tusks or the hunter could enter the homestead. Meanwhile, the tusks were put on the ground by the side of a fallen log (if no fallen log could be found, a small tree would be felled to provide a log). When the hunter's father came with a ram, he had to be accompanied by two elders. These men slaughtered the ram on behalf of the father, and took out its *taatha*, or stomach contents, which they stuffed into nerve cavities at the base of each (p.445) tusk. The fat of the ram's tail, too, was rubbed all over the surface of the tusks.

The tusks having been thus treated, the elders turned their attention to the hunter and the men who had helped him to carry the tusks. On the right hand middle fingers of each of them they put two rawhide strips (*ngwaro*), one made from a piece of the stomach (*ihu*) and one from the skin of the ram. The meat of the ram was then roasted and eaten by the hunter, his father, the two council elders, and the hunter's companions, after which the hunting party and the tusks could enter the homestead.

There were special customs concerning the storing of ivory if it was brought into the homestead. It had to be put in the hut of the father of the hunter, or of some man who was his father in the classificatory sense if his real father was dead, and each tusk had to be stored with a big stone at its tip and another at the root. It was believed that if this precaution was not taken the tusks would wriggle away like a snake. The tusks had also to be freely sprinkled with wood ash.

Only a small proportion of the tusks obtained by the Kikuyu *aathi* were used by the Kikuyu themselves to make ornaments, for their value was great, and the Kikuyu preferred to use them for trade. A Kikuyu hunter who sold a big tusk for cotton cloth, iron and brass wire, beads, etc. either directly (in the latter years), or through the mediation of the Akamba, used to obtain a sufficient quantity of these materials to retail for anything from 80 to 100 goats and sheep.

When any tusk was sold, the men who had helped in the drive and in carrying the tusks home were each entitled to a fee of one ewe, called *mwatĩ wa mũrutũrũri* (literally, a virgin ewe for the one who drives out).

Elephant skin was not used by the Kikuyu for any economic purpose, but the atlas (*ngata*) of an elephant was valuable, as it was commonly used as an oath stone (*gĩthathi*), see Chapter 23. The atlas was not, however, ever cut from the elephant's neck when the animal was killed, or it would have lost its magical properties. It was left until the skeleton had disintegrated, and then collected by some person who wished to possess it.

***Mbogo* (*Buffalo*)**

Buffalo were very common in the forest and thick bush surrounding Kikuyu country, and were in the habit of entering maize and other fields at night and doing considerable damage. Those Kikuyu, therefore, who (p.446) had land in the areas near the forest fringe, or near patches of dense forest encouraged the *aathi* to trap them, and the *aathi* were always only too ready to undertake the work, which if successful, meant not only plenty of meat, but also a hide which could be sold for three or four goat or sheep.

Buffalo horns, too, could be sold for grain or for pigiron, so it was worth the while of any *mwathi* to exert himself and trap buffalo. Occasionally Kikuyu other than *aathi* would make buffalo traps or would hunt them with poisoned arrows, but in the main this work was left to the *aathi*, and the Kikuyu agriculturalists were content to buy the hides or horns as and when they required them.

The principal methods of killing buffalo were with bow and poisoned arrow, pitfalls, the elephant harpoon, and spears. A *mwathi* hunting buffalo with bow and arrow, would usually go alone, and having crept close to a herd, release five or six poisoned arrows into different animals before the herd was fully aware of its danger. The poison used was the same as that for elephants, but with buffalo it worked much more speedily, and the wounded animal seldom escaped very far. In addition, the hunter, having shot his arrows, kept very quiet, so the animals he had wounded were not really frightened, and did not run away.

When using pitfalls the hunter selected as a site for his pit either a gap in the bush round the fields, which showed by the tracks in it that buffalos passed through it frequently, or else one of the game paths leading to the streams. The pits were usually about 8ft long, 3-4ft wide, and 7-10ft deep. At the bottom of these were put two sharpened hard wooden stakes about 2in. in diameter. The base of the pit was much narrower than the top so that an animal that fell into it was wedged and could not move. When a man was digging such a pit he worked with a companion, and the earth was raised from the bottom of the pit in leather bags (*mondo*). The man working at the bottom cut himself steps (*ngobio*) in the side of the pit, so that he could get up and down. The earth from each pit was scattered at a distance rather than left in a mound, as this might have frightened the animals, and dead, fallen leaves (*maragara*) were sprinkled over the soil thus scattered, to hide all traces of fresh earth.

When the pit was ready it was covered over with withies, and then grass and dry leaves, so that it was completely concealed.

Aathi who discovered a pathway constantly used by buffalo would sometimes climb a big tree over such a path and sit there with elephant harpoons (*maheti*) until the head came past. They then planted a harpoon into the backs of as many animals as they had harpoons. Being poisoned these would do their work speedily.

Hunting buffalo with spears was a dangerous sport, and was not (p.447) practised by the *aathi* so much as by Kikuyu warriors. A party of five or six warriors armed with spears would look for a lone bull or any animal that had become isolated from the herd. They crept up to it on different sides and then attacked it all together. Not uncommonly one or more of the attackers was severely wounded before the animal succumbed.

***Huria* (*Rhinoceros*)**

Rhinoceros were much hunted by the Wandorobo and were occasionally found in the forest and bush bordering Kikuyu country. On the rare occasions when they came into Kikuyu-owned forest and bush, the Kikuyu *aathi* also hunted them. If the *aathi* found a rhino path that was regularly used they would dig an outsize pitfall in it and often succeeded in trapping the animal in this way. More commonly however, they hunted them with the elephant harpoon, sitting in a tree over a rhino path and waiting patiently until a rhino came within striking distance.

Incredible as it may seem, the rhinoceros was sometimes hunted by Kikuyu warriors armed with only spear and sword. This was usually done only when a party of warriors came accidentally upon a rhinoceros while escorting the women and girls to the forests for fuel or building poles, that is to say, on *itua*. One of my informants still bore the scars of a wound which was inflicted on him by a rhino which he and three other warriors had attacked and killed with spears and swords.

Rhinoceros hide was prized for making the collars (*ndũkĩyũ*) used in hafting axe and chisel heads, and also as a foundation in such ornaments as the girls' *ciũma cia itina* (bead belt). Rhino horn was also in demand and was used for making a variety of things such as *haco* (a special arm ornament) and snuffboxes. It could also be bartered to the traders who came to Ngong for brass, copper, and beads, and one medium-sized horn procured goods valued at about 10 goats and sheep.

The *aathi* relished the flesh, and the soup made from rhino bones was regarded as very strengthening.

***Nguuũ* (*Hippopotamus*)**

These animals were not common in Kikuyu country but they were found in some of the larger swamps and in the bigger pools of such rivers as Rũũĩ Rũaka. The swamp beyond Limuru Station is called (p.448) Manguuũ (the waters of the hippopotamus), and was one of the places where they were commonest, the last one having been killed as recently as 1903.

Hippopotami were hunted only with elephant harpoons, and were either speared as they came out of the water to feed at night or when they were lying in the pools by day. Hippo fat was highly priced not only by the *aathi*, but also by every Kikuyu, for such fat was regarded as a specific against "evil eye". If a little of this fat was rubbed upon a newborn child or a newborn calf it was believed safe from the "envil eye" of anyone for ever. Hippopotamus fat was also in great demand by medicine-men, for it was, together with lion fat, elephant fat, and ostrich fat, an ingredient in

the best type of charm against attacks from wild beasts; it was also used for certain skin diseases in young children.

Hippo tusks were not used as ivory but were valued as charms against thieves. Anyone who became the possessor of such a tusk would conceal it near the entrance of his homestead and thus prevent any thief from entering.

***Ndũ, also called Mũrũthi, Mũnyambũ, and Ngatia* (*Lion*)**

The word *ngatia* was used mainly by the North Kikuyu round Nyeri, while the name *mũrũthi* was more correctly used of a lioness. Neither *aathi* nor the Kikuyu warriors ever went to hunt for lion, but at the same time, lions were not infrequently killed by herdsmen in defence of their cattle. Lions would climb or jump over the walls of cattle enclosures and attack the cattle inside, or they would attack an ox or a cow while herds were grazing, in which case the warriors would attack them with their spears. Even in recent times there were still many elderly Kikuyu with scars on their bodies from wounds inflicted on them by lion.

Whenever a lion was killed, if it had a mane, that mane was made into two *thũmbĩ* head-dresses, which were the property of the first two men to spear the animal. The rest of the skin belonged by right to the nearest medicine-man, and the claws were highly prized for charms. The fat of every lion killed was carefully saved and used for both magical and medicinal purposes.

The "hair-ball" (*kĩongero kĩa nda*) of a lion was very highly prized. The and the man who first wounded any lion had the right to this, and he sold it to a medicine-man for several goats and sheep. It was used by magic workers for making magic powders for a variety of purposes and when available, it (p.449) was always included in the magic powder called *itua-nda*, used in warfare and raiding.

***Ngarĩ* (*Leopard*)**

Like the lion, leopards were killed only when they attacked stock, and neither the agricultural Kikuyu nor the *aathi* ever set out to hunt or trap them. The skins and claws of a leopard were normally taken to a medicine-man of the *Anjirũ* clan. The lungs of the animal were also taken to the medicine-man, who roasted and ate them, for they were supposed to give him greater power in his work as a seer.

Small leopard skins were used like serval cat skins to make the dance dress of boys prior to initiation, and the Kikuyu firmly believed that serval cats, far from being a separate species, were the offspring of leopards and were, in fact, the runts of each litter.

***Kĩrũũmi* (*Normal Serval Cat*), *and Thimba* (*Melanistic Serval Cat, and Melanistic Civet Cat*)**

The skins of these animals were in great demand. The skin of the ordinary, spotted serval cat was used in making the correct dress worn by boys in certain of the pre-initiation dances (see Chapter 11), and the skins of the melanistic variety of serval and civet cat were made into skin cloaks for the senior elders, and only they could wear them. These animals were trapped by both the *aathi* and by Kikuyu boys themselves, the form of the trap being a special one called *kĩĩna*, which is described later.

***Njũi and Mbawa* (*The African Hunting Dog*)**

It is not clear whether these two Kikuyu names referred to one and the same species, or whether they represented distinct species. According to the majority of Kikuyu, the *njũi* was a plains animal and the name undoubtedly referred to the African hunting dog. The *mbawa*, on the other hand, was described to me by those Kikuyu who knew it best as a forest dog, hunting in small packs, and there were said to be several packs still living in this century in the Karatina forests of North Kikuyu. Both (p.450) the *mbawa* and the *njũi* were regarded as dangerous to goats and sheep and the men in charge of flocks in the border districts of Kikuyu country often had to defend their flocks against them. These dogs were never methodically hunted, and their skins were not used in any way.

***Numĩra* (*Giant Forest Hog*), *Ngũrũe* (*Bush Pig*) *and Ngĩrĩ* (*Wart Hog*)**

The *aathi* trapped these three species by means of pitfalls dug in the game paths made by the animals leading from the forest and bush to the cultivated areas. Kikuyu farmers also waged a constant war on these animals, which were exceedingly destructive of crops such as sweet potatoes and maize. The Kikuyu farmers' method was to wait for the animals in the fields at night, and then, when they heard them rooting in the gardens, to shoot poisoned arrows at them, or throw light, leaf-shaped spears at them.

If a Kikuyu agriculturalist killed one of these animals he called in a hunter to eat the flesh, but he first took from the animal such parts as he himself wanted. In the case of the giant forest hog, this was the skin, which was as good as a buffalo hide for shields; in the case of the wart hog or bush pig, it was strips of hide to be used as collars round the neck of goats, sheep, and cows, if they showed a tendency to abortion; in the case of all the three animals the foot and toe bones were kept as charm for women in childbirth, especially for those women who tended to have still births.

***Ndũiga or Mũitĩrĩro* (*Giraffe*)**

The Kikuyu *aathi* used to go down into the thorn country near the Ngong range in Maasai territory to hunt the giraffe with poisoned arrows, because its meat was held in great esteem. Neither the skin nor the tail hairs were made use of.

***Njagĩ or Wambũi* (*Zebra*)**

In the dry seasons herds of zebra not uncommonly came up from the plains into Kikuyu country, often doing great damage to crops. The (p.451) Kikuyu would attack them with both spears and bows and arrows, but no Kikuyu other than a hunter would eat zebra flesh. Among the *aathii*, too, anyone who was a member of the *Ambũi* clan was forbidden to eat zebra flesh, for to that clan the zebra was a sacred animal, although not a totem in the strict sense of the word. The reason why zebra were called *wambũi* as well as *njagĩ* was that the call of the zebra is a sound that can be likened to "*Wambũi! Wambũi!*" The Kikuyu therefore say that as zebra are constantly calling out the name of the founder of the *Ambũi* clan, they must have some kind of affinity with it.

***Thiruai or Namũ* (*Eland*)**

These animals were much sought after by the *aathi* and also by other Kikuyu, for the eland was not regarded as a wild animal as far as its flesh was concerned, but rather as a species of wild cattle. This was because, unlike other wild antelope, eland were very fat, like domestic animals. The eland was hunted with bows and poisoned arrows, and its flesh eaten, while its skin was used both for sleeping mats and carrying straps, in exactly the same way as an oxhide was used. The sinews from the back, too, were highly prized for use as bow strings, and were regarded, in fact, as "lucky gut" (*rũga rũa mũnyaka*).

***Ngati* (*Wildebeeste*)**

These animals were hunted with bow and arrow by the *aathi*, who would go out to the plains in Maasai country to hunt them at such times as the Maasai had moved further away in search of better grazing for their cattle. The agricultural Kikuyu, too, used to hunt them for the sake of their tails. Parties of 20 and 30 warriors and big uninitiated boys would go to the plains in search of them (and also to the forest glades, where the wildebeeste would come in the hot, dry season). Having located a herd of them, some of the party would lie in wait while others circled round and drove the herd towards their hidden companions. The latter would then leap up and attack the animals with spears and swords, killing several before the terrified herd had time to scatter.

The *aathi* prized the meat, but the ordinary Kikuyu would not, of course, touch it. They hunted these animals solely for their tails, which were made into fly whisks for the council elders. The hair of the tail was called *nginga*, and a fly-whisk made of it was called *gĩcuthĩ*.

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***Ngondi* (*Hartebeeste*)**

These plaint animals, like the zebra and the wildebeeste, used to come into the border territories of Kikuyu country at night in search of water and grazing when the plains were seriously affected by drought. The *aathi* hunted them, but apart from meat they provided nothing else of value to the Kikuyu hunters.

***Ndongoro or Inamũru* (*Greater Kudu*)**

Although there are no greater kudu today in any part of Kikuyu country or in any area nearby, the Kikuyu maintain that the species used to be fairly plentiful in Maasai country round the Ngong hills. Bands of the Kikuyu warriors going into Maasai country on a raid would sometimes encircle them and attack the bulls for the sake of their horns, which were much prized for making war horns. Greater kudu were also sometimes encountered on the plains on the floor of the Rift Valley when Kikuyu warriors went thither on raiding expeditions (*ita cia guamba*). Kikuyu *aathi*, too, would go into this country in small bands armed with bows and arrows in search of these and other game animals. The number of greater kudu horns in the possession of the Kikuyu testifies to the fact that they did kill these animals. Kudu horns were also occasionally obtained from the Kamba tribe by barter.

The name *inamũru* was also sometimes used for oryx.

***Kurũ or Ndoo* (*Waterbuck*)**

This animal was not uncommon in the bush country near the forest patches, and it caused a good deal of damage to crops. It was therefore shot with bows and arrows and occasionally trapped in pitfalls.

***Bongwe* (*Reedbuck*) *and Kĩrong'a* (*Impala*)**

These two animals were hunted with bow and arrow not only by (p.453) *aathi*, who liked their flesh, but also by the agricultural Kikuyu, who prized their skins greatly as a substitute for calf skin for making men's leather garments.

***Ndaratari or Ngũri* (*Thompson's Gazelle*)**

This plains gazelle was hunted with bow and arrow, and the male was especially sought after for the sake of its horns, which were used for containers for charms. The skins were used for making

leather garments (*ithii*) for men. The flesh was eaten only by the *aathi*, but other Kikuyu would also go down to the plains and shoot these animals for the sake of their skins and horns. The word *ngũri* was used for the female of the species and its horns were sometimes used in place of bushbuck horns for making hunting whistles.

***Thiya* (*Duiker*), *Thwariga* (*Bushbuck*), *and Thuni* (*Dik-dik*)**

These three species of smaller antelope were common in the bush of Kikuyu country and they were all hunted by the *aathi* with bows and arrows, and by means of spring traps. The meat of these animals was eaten by the *aathi*, but to the ordinary Kikuyu not only was the meat taboo, but it was also taboo to kill these animals when in charge of cattle, goats or sheep. However, all these species might be killed if they were damaging crops, and not only the *aathi*, but every Kikuyu man and boy, knew how to set traps for them, and did, in fact, do so along the edges of the fields.

The horns of all three species were in demand among the Kikuyu, those of the bushbuck being used to make snuff boxes, while those of the duiker and dik-dik were used to hold certain magic powders, and having been thus converted into charms, were worn on a necklace. The hooves of both duiker and dik-dik were in great demand among Kikuyu girls, as they were used to attach as ornaments to the fringes of the special, decorated pubic apron (*gĩcoco*) which they wore for dancing. The traps used for these animals are described in a later section of this chapter.

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***Ngunũ* (*Red Forest Duiker*)**

This little antelope was fairly common and its skin was in great demand for making men's leather bags (*mondo*). Its skin was also used for making *ngoi*, the carrying "bags" or cradles in which women carried their babies. There was no taboo against this animal being killed by herdsmen and whenever they got a chance they hunted it both with bows and with clubs. The *aathi* also trapped this animal in great numbers in the forest. It was often spoken of as "the women's goat" (*mbũri ya aka*), just as the buffalo was called "the women's cow". The method of trapping it is described under "Traps".

***Nguyo* (*Colobus Monkey*)**

The skins of this monkey were in great demand among the Kikuyu. As we have seen in the chapter on dancing, ornaments made of the skins of these monkeys were used by men and boys in most of the important dances, and any warrior who did not possess such ornaments would feel much ashamed at a dance, in fact, he would feel "undressed".

In view of the great demand, and because this monkey was shy and hard to obtain, there were specialists who hunted colobus as a living and did nothing else.

Colobus could not be trapped like ordinary monkeys, for they seldom came down to the ground, and they could not be shot with poisoned arrows, because if they were, the skins were valueless, as all the long hair would fall out, and it was this long hair that was wanted for the ornaments. Colobus were, therefore, hunted with a special form of arrow known as *thuuthi*, which was used exclusively for this purpose. These arrows had wooden and not metal heads, the reason for this being that any arrow that missed its mark was irretrievably lost in the dense forest, and therefore to use metal-headed arrows would have been too costly. For the same reason, the shafts of the arrows were not made of the ordinary arrow shaft wood (*mũgumocano*), but from reeds called *thara* or sometimes from stems of *magoko* thatching grass. A colobus skin was bartered for one sword, or two big goat skins, or a very large block of soda.

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***Ngĩma* (*Blue Monkey and Sykes Monkey*) *and Therũ* (*Blackfaced Monkey*)**

These three species of monkey were plentiful in Kikuyu country, and the two former were particularly common and did a great deal of damage to crops. In consequence, they were trapped in large numbers, and the agricultural Kikuyu made and set the traps themselves. A monkey trap was called *gĩkerenge,* and is described in the latter part of this chapter. The skins of all three species were used for making men's fur cloaks, those of the blue monkey being particularly favoured.

***Nũgũ* (*Baboon*)**

Like the monkeys, baboons were a constant menace to the crops near the forest and they had to be trapped. The *gĩkerenge* trap used for monkeys was sometimes used for baboons but was not always successful, so these animals were also trapped with a special form of spring trap as described under "Traps". Baboon skins were used to make *thũmbĩ* head-dresses by those warriors who could not obtain a lion's mane for the purpose, but they were not as popular.

***Nyama* (*Aardvark*)**

This animal was not actively hunted, for it was a nocturnal animal living in burrows. It was not even trapped, but when it was encountered on moonflight nights or on the rare occasions when it appeared by day (in very dry weather only), it was attacked with spears and killed because its skin was much valued for leather, as this was so strong that nothing could break it. In particular, the leather thongs used by beekeepers, for putting up and taking down hives, were made whenever possible from the skin of the aardvark. The fat, too, was valued for its medicinal properties, both for external application in skin diseases (in the same way as the oil from queen white ants), and for internal use.

The meat of the aardvark was not only eaten by the *aathi*, but also by members of several Kikuyu clans who did not ordinarily eat any "wild" meat, apart from that of the eland. No Kikuyu could tell me why it was (p.456) that this animal was called *nyama* (which means meat), but the fact that its flesh was eaten, while the flesh of other wild animals was not is probably linked with this in some way.

(The other name for *nyama* is *ngari*).

***Njege* (*Porcupines*)**

These rodents were very common in Kikuyu country and they greatly damaged root and corn crops, as well as sugar-cane. The Kikuyu, therefore, constantly called in the aid of the *aathi* to trap them in the fields and some Kikuyu who were not *aathi* also learned to trap them. The trap used was a variety of spring trap and was called *mũtego wa njege* (the porcupine trap). In addition to this, porcupines were also speared by men who sat up in the fields at night guarding the crops.

From time to time, if the number of porcupines became too great in any area, the agricultural Kikuyu would organise a porcupine "day" and exterminate every animal in the district. Several days would first be spent in locating all the porcupine burrows, and on the day selected for the drive, bands of three and four men and boys were sent to each burrow to guard it. A hot, sunny day during the wet season was chosen, because on such days the porcupines would come out from their damp, water-logged holes and go into the bush to lie in the sun to get warm and dry. Once the parties had taken up their positions guarding the entrance to all burrows, the drive began. Men,

women, and children went through the bush so as to scare the animals and make them bolt for their holes, where they were speared and clubbed by the party posted there for the purpose.

When the drive was over, great quantities of brushwood, grass, and banana leaves were collected, and smudge fires built at the mouth of every burrow, so that any animals that had escaped during the drive or that had not come out to bask in the sun were suffocated by the acrid banana leaf smoke.

Occasionally, a *mwathi* would hunt and kill porcupines by an even more curious method. Armed with a sword, he would creep down porcupine holes and kill any animals that he encountered. Then turning round in the chamber at the bottom of the burrow, he would creep out again. This was, however, a dangerous method of porcupine hunting, because sometimes poisonous snakes also inhabited the burrows and occasionally a hunter never reappeared.

Porcupine quills were used by the Kikuyu warriors to make tassels in the form of dance cape (see Chapter 11).

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***Gĩkami* (*All Species of the Genus Dendrohyrax and of the Genus Procavia*)**

Both the tree and the rock hyrax were much sought after by the Kikuyu, the former for their skins, and both for their value in magical ceremonies. The Kikuyu believed (see Chapter 7) that the stomach contents of the hyrax were of great potency in preventing contagious abortion in sheep and goats, and in promoting the general welfare of stock. Any Kikuyu, therefore, whether a *mwathi* or not, who found a place where hyrax lived, made every effort to kill one for the sake of its stomach contents.

The *aathi*, moreover, spent days hunting tree hyrax for the sake of their skins, for a fur cloak of 30 hyrax skins could be bartered for a goat or a sheep. To catch a hyrax, the person concerned, whether a *mwathi* or not, cut a long pliable stick, split one end of it, and bound it in such a way as to keep the split sections apart. Having located a hole in a tree inhabited by hyrax, the hunter thrust his pronged stick into the hole until he could feel a hyrax cowering at the bottom. He then jabbed it fiercely with the prongs of his stick, and having embedded them in the creature, twisted the stick round and round so as to get the animal firmly caught on the prongs. He could then drag the dying animal out. A hunter always worked with a companion, who waited at the base of the tree in which the hole was situated, so that if a hyrax bolted from its hole and tried to escape it was knocked on the head. The same method was used to draw rock hyrax out from holes in rocks.

***Mbĩa* (*Rat*)**

Prior to the coming of the Europeans, the Kikuyu say that the brown house rat—which now does so much damage to stored corn and hides—was not known, but there was a smaller black rat which did a certain amount of damage to corn stored in granaries, and which was trapped with a special trap called *gĩtatĩ kĩa mbĩa* (see section on "Traps").

A brown rat, somewhat resembling the house rat, but larger, was called *ndathingũ*, but it did not damage anything and was not trapped.

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***Ngaara* (*Zebra Rat*) *and Mbuukũ* (*Field Rabbit*)**

These little rodents were not trapped, but boys were told by their parents to destroy them. This they did by making small clearings (*ciemo*) where they put down bait and then sat to wait for the

mice to appear. They then shot them with bows and wooden-headed arrows. (The preparation of *ciemo* was called *kwema*.) It was absolutely taboo to shoot zebra rats when herding cattle, goats, or sheep, and to do so would necessitate purification of the flocks.

***Huko* (*Mole Rat*)**

The mole rat, which is not a mole, though often called one because it behaves like one, eats roots instead of eating worms and insects. The animal was therefore a great menace to such root crops as sweet potatoes, yams, and edible arum. The Kikuyu waged a constant war against it, and every man and boy knew how to make the special mole trap *gĩtatĩ kĩa huko*. Some men were more skilled than others, and such men would be called in to aid a friend when the menace was severe. The method of making and setting the trap is described later in this chapter.

***Ndogona* (*Hedgehog*)**

This little insectivore was quite common, and whenever encountered, it was killed and taken to a medicine-man, who used it as an ingredient in the magic powder called *kĩoho*, which was used to protect cattle enclosures and to prevent stock from straying.

***Kamũhembe* (*The Pigmy Shrew*)**

Although not ordinarily trapped, this animal was sought after by medicine-men, who used it for making magic powder called *ikanda*.

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***Mbũkũ* (*Hare*)**

These were common in Kikuyu country but it was taboo to kill them, and not even the *aathi* would eat their flesh. It was particularly unlucky to kill a hare while herding goats and sheep. In actual fact, herdboys did sometimes kill and eat hares in spite of the taboo, and if a man found his flocks dying unaccountably, he would question his sons, and beg them to tell the truth. If he found they had been guilty of killing a hare, the flock could be saved only by special purification ceremonies. The hare was the hero of many Kikuyu folk tales and was regarded as the epitome of wisdom without strength.

Reptiles

***Nguru* (*Tortoise*)**

Although tortoises were neither hunted nor trapped, this chapter seems to be the most suitable one in which to give an account of the Kikuyu treatment of tortoises. Ordinarily, tortoises, apart from water tortoises, were seldom found in bush and forest country, and the Kikuyu regarded them as essentially plains dwellers belonging to dry and waterless country. In view of its association with hot and dry areas, the belief arose that if a tortoise found its way into the well-watered agricultural lands of the Kikuyu, it would bring with it drought and famine. Consequently, if ever a tortoise was found in Kikuyu country, it was considered a matter of vital importance to remove it as soon as possible, and it had to be removed in such a way that it would not leave a curse upon the land.

When, therefore, a tortoise was found in Kikuyu country, the elders of the area in which it had been found were called together, and two or three were appointed to make a sacrifice to propitiate it and the evil powers that had sent it. A ram or a ewe was slaughtered, and the stomach contents (*taatha*) removed, after which the meat was ceremonially eaten by the elders who were to dispose of the tortoise. Having eaten the sacrificial meat, they smeared the tortoise with some of the

stomach contents, and then wrapped it up in dry banana leaves. One man then carried the reptile and the other a bundle containing the rest of the *taatha* of the ram. The men detailed for this task had to be members of the (p.460) ruling generation (*ene thĩ*). They then set out for the plains, taking the tortoise with them, and dropping a trail of *taatha* all along the route which they took. When they were well beyond the furthermost cultivated areas, the men pronounced blessings on the tortoise, released it, and returned home.

When they returned to their own homes, they had to go to a medicine-man to be ceremonially purified, for "*nguru nĩ ũkĩa*" ("a tortoise is poverty"), and if they were not purified, they would lose all their property and become very poor.

Although tortoises that found their own way into Kikuyu country were treated thus, any Kikuyu who found a dead or a live tortoise out on the Maasai plains or in Kamba country would take it back to Kikuyu country with him and sell it to a medicine-man, who used the shell for making the magic powders called *ikanda* and *kĩoho*.

***Kĩmbu* (*Chameleon*)**

The Kikuyu were afraid of the ordinary chameleon, believing that if it spat upon a person, that person would waste away and die. It was also believed that if a chameleon got into a person's hair, it could be removed only by shaving off all the hair. For these two reasons, if a Kikuyu came across a chameleon, he would either leave it alone, or else kill it by throwing a pinch of snuff into its mouth when it opened its mouth to hiss.

***Mũriyũ* (*Three-Horned Chameleon*)**

This reptile was regarded differently, and if found it was killed with a stick for the sake of its horns, which were considered an unfailing charm against headaches (see Chapter 21).

***Mũrarũ* (*Green Grass Snake*)**

This harmless snake was always killed if seen by a traveller, for a person who killed a *mũrarũ* would be lucky.

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***Nyamũ ya Thĩ* (*Brown House Snake*)**

If a brown house snake entered a Kikuyu hut it might on no account be killed or harmed, but had to have fresh milk and fat poured out over it and then be gently guided to the door of the hut and made to go out.

***Nduĩra* (*Cobra*) *and Itahuha* (*Puff-adder*)**

These two deadly snakes were often spoken of as Ũkabi or Maasai, to symbolize the fact that they were enemies to be killed at all costs, and whenever a Kikuyu came across one of either of these, he killed it at once and burnt it, "lest it should give birth to young after it was dead".

***Itarara* (*Python*)**

Pythons were killed with spears whenever they were found, and they were then skinned and the skins taken to a medicine-man, who would pay handsomely for them with iron and goat skins.

Birds

The Kikuyu had names for many of the birds which were common in their country, but only a comparatively small number were trapped or used in any way.

***Nyaga* (*Ostrich*)**

The feathers of the ostrich were in great demand, not only among the agricultural Kikuyu, but also among the *aathi*, yet in spite of this there was no organised way of hunting or trapping them. Normally, a man went to the plains and collected any moulted feathers he could find, or, failing that, he would buy feathers from the Akamba, who hunted (p.462) this bird with bow and arrow. Among both the agricultural Kikuyu and the *aathi* it was, on the whole, regarded as unlucky to kill an ostrich and this was especially true if by any chance it was killed by men or boys who were in charge of herds of cattle. However, the desire for the feathers was so great, that if an opportunity offered, any warrior would kill an ostrich, even if doing so involved him in the necessity of slaughtering of a ram to purify the herds of which he was in charge. This purification consisted of the ceremony of *gũthiũrũra rũũru* (to encircle the flock) and the man who killed the bird had also to be purified.

Among certain sections of the Kikuyu *aathi*, and also among some of the Wandorobo, with whom this custom originated, a man who killed an ostrich was regarded as being unclean in the same way as if he had killed a man. He therefore had to have his head shaved, and a ram killed for his personal purification. No one, not even the *aathi*, would eat the flesh of the ostrich.

Ostrich egg shell was in demand for making various ornaments, and also disc beads to be worn by babies to avert the evil eye. The egg shell was obtained by finding a nest where young birds had been hatched, and collecting the fragments of broken shell. Whole eggs were also in demand but they were never broken up; instead they were taken whole to a medicine-man, who prepared them in a special way, with one hole in the side and one at each end. The eggs were then slung on a leather thong, and a cow's tail was inserted into the hole at the side. This curious ornament was borrowed from the medicine-man by boys and girls for certain dances prior to initiation, and also by warriors. If such an egg were broken, the borrower had to pay a fine of a virgin ewe.

***Nganga* (*Helmeted Guinea-Fowl*) *and Nge..*(*?*) (*Kenya Crested Guinea-Fowl*)**

Both of these species were commonly trapped, not only by the *aathi*, who valued their flesh, but also by uninitiated Kikuyu boys who did not eat the flesh but used the feathers for certain forms of head-dress necessary for some of the pre-initiation dances. Guinea-fowl were trapped by two different methods: with a small form of the *gĩkerenge* similar to that used for trapping monkeys, and by means of a spring trap. Both types are described later.

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***Ngware and Mũcũnũ* (*Species of Francolin*) *and Mũngwethe* (*Yellow-necked Spurfowl*)**

These birds were trapped by means of the spring trap, but neither the *aathi* nor the Kikuyu boys who trapped them would eat the flesh. The only reason for trapping them was the damage which they did in the fields when maize was planted.

***Ndutura* (*Ring-necked varieties of Dove*) *and Gatirahũgĩ* (*Laughing Dove*)**

These two species were commonly trapped by uninitiated Kikuyu boys for the sake of their flesh, but the *aathi* did not trap them, as it was not worth their while to do so. These doves were trapped by three different methods: by means of a small *gĩkerenge* trap, by means of a spring trap, and by means of a *gĩtara* (nest trap). The last was made and used as follows. When a dove's nest was located, a small hoop of withy was made with a diameter slightly larger than the nest. Across the hoop the boys then wove a strong net, and the hoop and net were set over the nest and about 8in. above it, supported by small forked twigs. Two strings were fastened to the rim of the hoop and

led from it to the ground at the foot of the tree. When the parent bird returned to the nest, it would usually ignore this contraption above the nest, and settle down to sit on the eggs. The boy who had set the trap, accompanied by a companion, would then steal up to the foot of the tree and pull both strings. This brought the netted hoop down on to the bird, and held it securely on its nest. One boy then held the strings taut while the second climbed the tree and captured the bird.

If the Kikuyu boys found fledgeling doves in a nest, they would tie strings round their legs and fasten them so that the fledgelings could not leave the nest. The parent birds would then go on feeding them until they were very fat, and long after the time when the young ones would normally have taken wing. Young doves treated thus were succulent and highly prized by the boys.

p.464

***Nderi* (*Vultures of various kinds*)**

As vulture feathers were in great demand among the Kikuyu for a variety of dance head-dresses, and also for making the feather cloak called *riba*, these birds were frequently hunted and trapped. If a Kikuyu noticed vultures dropping from the sky on to a kill, he would make his way to the spot and then hide while the vultures gorged themselves, when he would then rush from his hiding place. The gorged vultures could not rise quickly, and he could kill half a dozen or more with his club before the flock managed to take wing.

A second method consisted of tying bits of meat and intestines to a long string of twisted sinew. These would then be thrown a little distance from where an ox or a sheep was being cut up, and the vultures that were attracted to the spot by the sight of the meat would swoop on these titbits and swallow them whole. The Kikuyu then had only to haul on his string quickly to "land" the vulture before it had time to disgorge the meat and escape.

Yet another way of trapping vultures was to set a whole series of unbaited traps around the carcass of an animal, and when the vultures came in a flock to eat the meat, some of them, as they hobbled around and fought each other, were sure to put their feet on the releases of the traps and be caught.

***Ngoru* (*Buzzard*)**

Buzzard feathers were required by all boys who wished to be initiated for their special head-dress called *mũhĩĩro*. Consequently, these boys, unless they possessed a head-dress that had been handed on to them by a brother who had already been initiated, had to trap them for themselves.·Buzzards were caught by two different methods. If a buzzard's nest was located, and it was in an accessible position, a trap of the *gĩtara* type was made, similar to that already described for doves. As, however, it was by no means easy to find such a nest, most boys trapped them by means of a variation of the spring trap, and baited it with a live mole rat or other small rodent.

p.465

***Hũngũ* (*The Common Kite*)**

Kite feathers were used by the Kikuyu in the treatment of a certain cattle disease (see Chapter 7), but in spite of this kites were never trapped. Their feathers were picked up below the trees where they roosted at night. At certain times of the year the resident kites were joined by European kites, which came to Africa as migrants in large numbers. These migrating kites usually roosted all together, and being in moult, shed a good many feathers, which could be collected beneath their roosting trees.

***Ngũgũ* (*Hartlaub's Turaco*)**

The red wing feathers of Hartlaub's turaco were much sought after by the Kikuyu for two purposes. They were fastened to the *mũthĩgi* staff of warriors who had killed a Maasai, and carried by such warriors while singing and dancing the *kaarĩ* (*ina kaarĩ*), and these same red feathers are also believed to have a medicinal value for eye troubles in small children.

In spite of the fact that the Kikuyu so desired their feathers, they never hunted or trapped these birds, but only picked up the feathers in the forest when they happened to find them.

Even the Kikuyu *aathi* did not hunt and trap these birds, but the Wandorobo used to do so sometimes, using a bow and arrow, and they bartered the feathers for corn.

***Mũrũgũ* (*Jackson's Widow Bird and Widow Birds of various other Long-tailed Species*)**

When the males of these widow birds are in mating plumage they have long black tail feathers, which were used by small Kikuyu boys for a head-dress in the *ngũcũ* dance. This head-dress was called *mũhũga*. In order to obtain the feathers the boys would first locate places where these male birds "danced" (*gũtuuma*) during the mating season in order to attract females, and then trap the birds there. When dancing round a tuft of grass, the male bird jumps violently up and down until it has (p.466) beaten down the grass all round the tuft. Such a bird returns to the same dancing ground day after day, and the boys trapped them in one of three ways. Sometimes they stuck little sharpened stakes in the "dancing ground" so that they projected about 1in. above the soil. When the bird revisited its ground and started dancing, it would sooner or later impale itself on these points, and be killed. They also constructed ordinary spring traps at these dancing grounds and caught the birds in them. Another way to catch them was to put sticks near the dancing ground smeared with bird-lime made from the gummy latex of the *mwerere* tree. Once a bird had settled on one of these gummed sticks it could not release itself again. This gum was called *werere*.

The tail feathers of the various long-tailed widow birds were also used by warriors for the head-dress called *kĩrũgũ*.

***Thonjo* (*Yellow varieties of Weaver Birds build Hanging Nests*), *Nyagathanga* (*Streaky Seedeater*), *Kanyoni-ka-nja* (*Fire Finch and also Cordon Bleu*), *and Mũnyĩrĩ* (*Pin-tail Whydah Bird*)**

These and other small grain eating birds were commonly trapped by the boys by means of an improvised trap made from a winnowing tray (*gĩtarũrũ*). This was propped up by a short stick to which was fastened a long string. Under the tray thus supported was put some corn, and the tray was set in the courtyard, whither all these birds came in numbers in search of grain that had been spilled from the granaries or during the process of grinding corn.

Having propped up the tray, the boys would hide a little way and when several birds were under the tray they would pull the string, so that the tray fell down with the birds shut in under it.

Except at the time of the annual initiation ceremonies, the birds thus trapped were simply killed and thrown away, the only object in trapping them being to reduce the numbers and so have less corn eaten in the fields at harvest time. At the time of the initiation ceremonies, however, the boys who had been initiated in accordance with the Ũkabi guild rules would get their young brothers to trap these birds for them, so as to add them to the head-dresses which they wore during the novice stage (see Chapter 17), and which they were supposed to kill for themselves with a bow and arrow.

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***Thũriũ* (*Fiscal Shrike*)**

In connection with the above head-dress worn by novices of the Ūkabi guild, the skins of the common fiscal shrike were the most highly prized, and these were obtained by trapping the shrike with a *gĩkerenge* trap set in the manner of a *gĩtarũrũ* trap, as described above, and baited with live locusts or with mice firmly pegged to the ground.

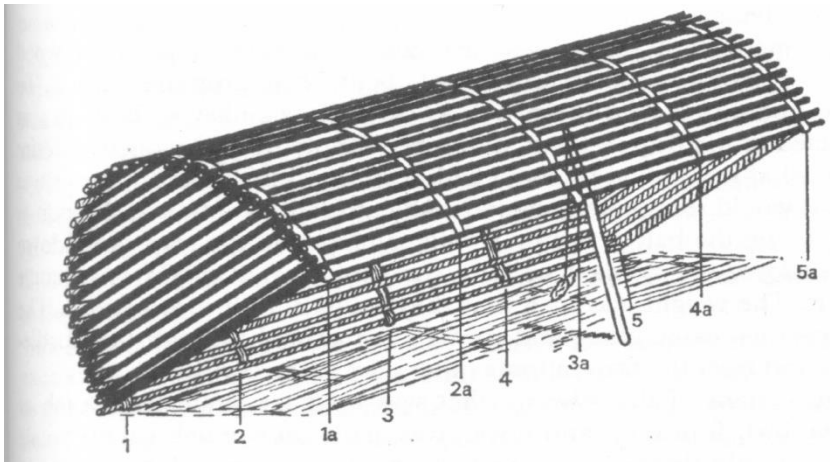

Fig. 9. A trap for baboons and monkeys (*Gīkerenge*).

Traps

The methods of constructing game pits, the *gĩtara* type of bird trap, and the *gĩtarũrũ* trap for small grain eating birds have already been given in detail. Several more complex traps were also mentioned, and the details of their construction is given below.

Gīkerenge

This was a hurdle-work trap, and two varieties were made, of which one was used for catching monkeys and baboons, and the other (a smaller variety which was set differently), for catching game birds.

p.468

The *gĩkerenge* used for monkeys and baboons was constructed as follows. First, five pliant saplings of equal length—about 7ft.— were bent into an arc and both ends were stuck in the ground, so that the five formed a series of parallel arches over a piece of ground about 4ft. and 3ft wide. In Fig. 9 above, the points where the two ends of each sapling were stuck into the ground are marked: 1 and la, 2 and 2a, etc.

These five arches having been fixed in position, a large number of saplings about 4ft 6in. long were woven in and out of the five arches hurdle-fashion, until the whole of the arched area was formed of hurdle-work, making a kind of semi-cylinder. Next the two ends of this trap were blocked up by fixing a series of cross pieces at either end, these being wedged between the ends of the saplings forming the hurdle-work, and firmly tied in place with bark string. The trap was then in the form of a half cylinder sealed at both ends, but it was immovable because the ends of each of the five arched saplings with which the construction started were still firmly embedded in the ground. Before the trap could be moved away for use, the whole structure had to be made doubly firm and strong by taking some pieces of wood about 3in. in diameter, and long enough to tie firmly to the base of the saplings 1 and 5 at the points where they emerged from the ground at 1 and la, and 5 and 5a. These bars served a double purpose: they made the ends of the trap strong so that the five arched saplings could be pulled up out of the ground without the trap collapsing, and they also added considerably to the weight of the trap so that a monkey caught inside could not lift it with its back.

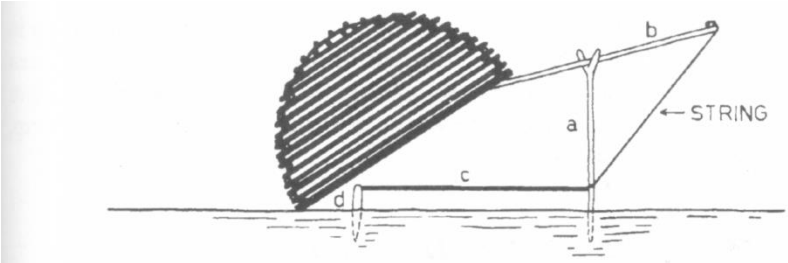

Fig. 10. The trap for guinea fowl, francolin and doves (*Gĩkerenge*).

Once these crossbars had been firmly fixed, the ends of the five arched saplings were pulled out of the ground, bent backwards, and tied firmly to the hurdle-work. The trap was then ready to take to the fields where it was to be set.

The method of setting was exceedingly simple. A piece of wood about 2½ft long was set at an angle of about 75° to prop the trap up. To it was tied a succulent maize cob as bait. The monkey or baboon was attracted to the trap in the first instance simply by an inquisitive desire to see what it was that the man had been working on, and when it was near, it would see the bait and naturally attempt to obtain it. As soon as it pulled on the bait, the prop would collapse and the trap came down and enclosed the monkey and any companions that might have come with it. The weight was such that they could not lift it to get out. The trapper then came along and speared the animal through the hurdle-work, and reset the trap in some other part of the cornfield.

The variant of the *gĩkerenge* that was used for game birds such as guinea-fowl, fracolin, and doves, was made on a much smaller scale and with only three arched saplings about 3ft. long and ½in. thick to (p.469) form the frame for the wicker-work, and the area covered was only about 2ft. x 15in. In place of the thick bars used to strengthen the ends of the monkey trap, a thin sapling was used.

The setting of the trap was also different, for a bird would not seize the bait and pull on it like a monkey, and so some other means of release had to be devised. A short forked stick (a) was stuck into the ground, and then a second stick (b), about 1ft long, had a string fastened to it at one end. The stick (b) was laid over the fork of (a) in such a way that about 9in. projected at one end and three at the other, the long end being the one to which the string was tied. Next the edge of the *gĩkerenge* was rested on the short projection, while the stick (b) was held horizontally by the trapper holding on to the string. The string was then led down to the base of stick (a) and wound once round the base about 2in. from ground. A third stick (c) was set horizontally at the base of the area covered by the trap, also about 2in. from the ground and wedged between a short stick fixed firmly in the ground at the back of the trap (d), and the base of (a), where it was pressed against the string, held the string firmly, and therefore prevented stick (b) from collapsing. Corn was then sprinkled on the ground inside the area covered by the trap, and all was ready.

Any game bird that came to eat the corn was bound, sooner or later, to sit or tread, on stick (c), and by so doing it would push it down and release, the end of the string, thus also releasing stick (b) and allowing it to tilt forward. This in turn would cause the trap to come down and enclose the bird.

As described the system sounds clumsy, but in fact the trap was exceedingly efficient, and I have both seen it in use and used it myself, to good effect. When a bird had been caught, the trapper dug a small hole in the ground under one side, put his hand in, and caught his prey by the legs before he lifted off the trap and killed the bird.

p.470

***Mũtego* (*Spring Trap*)**

This is the name that was applied to all the varieties of spring trap in which a bent sapling was used with a combination of string and wooden releases in such a way as to draw a noose tightly round either the neck or the legs of an animal or bird. There were three main varieties of this trap, each with a distinct method of setting.

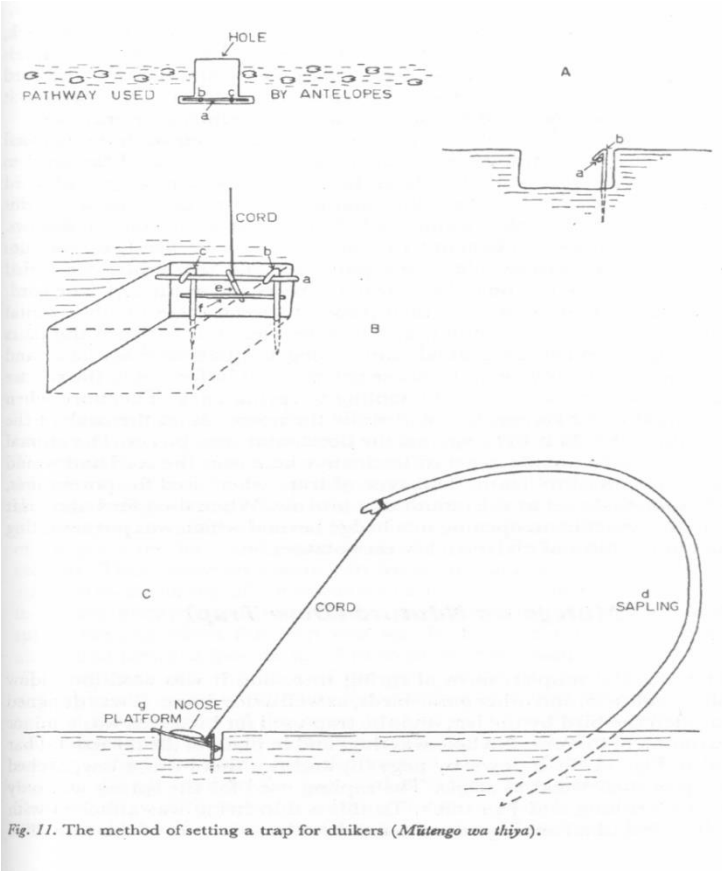

Fig. 11. The method of setting a trap for duikers (*Mũtengo wa thiya*).

p.470

***Mũtego wa Thiya* (*Duiker Trap*)**

This trap, used for duiker, bushbuck, dik-dik, and other small antelope, was always set in a pathway made by the animals, leading from the bush into cultivated areas. Such a pathway having been located, a small rectangular trench was dug across it, about 8in. long, 4in. wide, and 4in. deep. (See Fig. 11A for position of hole in relation to the path.). Across one end of the trench, about 1in. from that end, a piece of wood (a) about 8in. long was fixed by two pegs driven into the bottom of the hole at (b) and (c) in Figs 11A and B. Next a strong sapling, (d) in Fig.11C, of some such springy wood as *mũbirũ*, about 2in. in diameter and 7-9ft long, was firmly planted in the ground about 4ft away from the end of the trench where the pegs had been inserted. To the upper end of this sapling was fixed a strong cord (*mũhĩndo*), about 5ft long. About 3ft from where it was fastened to the sapling a small piece of wood, (e) in Fig. 11B, about 1in. long and a ¼in. in diameter, was tied. The 2ft length of cord projecting beyond this little piece of wood was made into a running noose. The sapling was then bent over until it was possible to insert the little piece of wood (e), under the cross-piece (a) that was held down by the pegs (b) and (c). This little peg (e) was inserted under (a) from the front, and then a short piece of wood (f) was placed behind the pegs (b) and (c) so as to hold the trigger (e) in position (see Fig. 11B). Next a series of pieces of wood (g) were placed with one end resting upon the release (f) and the other ends on the ground at the opposite end of the trench. Over these pieces of wood was placed the running noose, and then the whole was covered with dry leaves.

When an antelope came along the pathway after the trap had been set, it was bound to step on one of the pieces of wood that were resting on (f). This would press (f) down and release (e), which in turn would allow the sapling to fly back and so draw the running nose tight round (p.471) the legs that stepped on the trap. The animal would be thus jerked violently forward and held tightly by a cord round one of its front legs until such time as the trapper arrived on the scene.

p.472

***Mũtego wa Njege* (*Porcupine Trap*)**

The porcupine trap was designed to catch an animal by the neck, because this variant of the spring trap was used for trapping animals which had sharp teeth, and which would quickly bite through any cord that was round a leg. In addition to being used to catch porcupine it was also sometimes used for baboons and occasionally for antelopes.

The main structure of the trap was exactly the same as that described above, but the running noose was not made at the end of the cord to which the trigger was attached. Instead, there was a second cord attached to the end of the same sapling, and a running noose on cord was set in a vertical frame made from six pieces of wood, as follows. First, two pairs of sticks about 1in. in diameter were firmly driven into the ground on either side of the pathway, and two others were tied equally firmly across on either side of the pairs and at the top. The cord, with its running noose, was then passed between these two horizontal pieces, the noose opened out, and its sides were put between the pairs of uprights. When an animal came along the pathway, its head and neck would already be in the noose before it put its foot on to the release mechanism and so caused the sapling to spring back. Therefore, when the sapling did spring, it would draw the noose round the neck of the animal and hold it tight against the horizontal cross pieces. The animal would thus be unable to get its teeth anywhere near the cord and would soon be choked to death. This type of trap, when used for porcupines, was sometimes set at the mouth of a burrow. When used for baboons it was always set in an opening in a hedge beyond which was put tempting bait in the form of maize and sweet potatoes.

***Mũtego wa Ndutura* (*Dove Trap*)**

This was the simplest form of spring trap, and it was used for widow birds, vultures, and other game birds, as well as for doves. It was designed to catch the bird by the leg, and the trap used for buzzards was a variation of this one. No hole was dug, and in place of the horizontal bar (a) in Fig. 11, held down by pegs (b) and (c), there was a low, arched hoop of such wood as *mũgio*. The sapling used for the spring was only about 3ft long and ¾in. thick. To this a thin string was attached with a trigger and a running noose as for the other varieties of the trap. The (p.473) trigger was passed under the hoop and it was held in position by a release stick wedged between the end of the trigger and a small upright stick about 5in. away. The noose was arranged very carefully over the release and was covered over with dust. A little corn was sprinkled on the ground on both sides of the release, and when a dove or other bird came along, it would step on the release and set off the trigger. The sapling would then fly back and the bird would be caught by one or both legs.

When used for vultures, this type of trap was not baited, but a number of traps were set round a carcass, and some of the birds, when hopping round and fighting each other, would get caught.

When set for a buzzard, the trap was placed in the open and a live or dead mouse or mole was pegged down under the release. A buzzard circling in the sky would see the mouse, stoop, and seize it with both claws. As it did so, it would be bound to knock the release stick and let loose the trigger, and the noose would then fly back and catch it by the legs.

***Kĩĩna* (*Fig. 12*)**

The trap known as *kĩĩna* (Fig. 12) was a special variant of the spring stapling trap, and was used for trapping *Carnivora* such as serval cats. The first thing to be done in making a *kĩĩna* trap was to dig a hole about 4ft long and 2ft wide. It was dug in such a way that its floor was gently sloping, being about 2ft 6in. deep at the deepest end, and sloping gradually up to surface level at the other end as shown. At the back end of the pit (the deep end), two sticks (b) were driven firmly into the

ground. These were set about 3in. from the back wall and about 5in. apart. Across the top of them was tied a horizontal piece (c) which had to be very firmly fastened as it had to take the whole of the strain of the spring sapling when the trap was set. In front of this structure and about 8in. forward from it, or 11in. from the back wall, two light canes (f) were stuck into the floor of the pit about 8in. apart. These canes were split along the middle but not at either end, and their object was to hold the two sides of the noose in position when the trap was set.

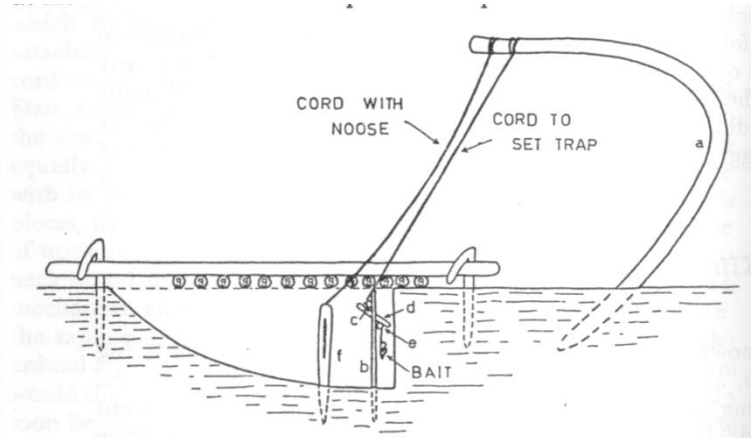

Fig. 12. Carnivore trap (*Kīīna*). (a) Sapling. (b) Upright stick. (c) Horizontal ba (d) Trigger. (e) Trigger release. (f) A cane. (g) Crossbars over the pit.

At this stage in the construction a strong sapling (a) of *mũbirũ* or other springy wood was stuck into the ground about 3ft beyond the back wall of the pit, and to the top of this sapling two strong cords were fastened. One of these had a running noose at its end, and to the other was attached a little trigger of wood (d) about 2in. long. The sapling (p.474) was then bent forward until the trigger could be passed under the horizontal bar from in front, and then a trigger release stick (e) was passed behind the two uprights and in front of the trigger (d), thus keeping the trigger in position. To the trigger release was tied a rat, a bird ,or a piece of meat. Then the noose on the other cord was put in position and lightly pushed between the split canes, so as to hold it in position.

The trap was now set, and the next thing to do was to arrange a series of short, thick bars of wood (g) across the top of the hinder two thirds of the pit and peg them down firmly so that any animal that wanted to get at the bait had to enter the trap from the open end.

When a serval cat or other carnivore smelled the meat, it entered the pit, and in reaching its neck forward to the bait, it had to put its head through the noose. When it seized the bait, the trigger was released and the sapling flew back, drew the noose tightly round the neck of the animal, and wedged it against the cross-bars (g). The animal was stunned by having its head jerked violently against the cross-bars, and it was also choked by the noose, so by the time the trapper came in the morning it was usually dead.

Gĩtatĩ kĩa Mbĩa (*Rat Trap*)

The Kikuyu rat trap was made in the following way (Fig. 13). The (p.475) stump of a banana tree, about 3ft long, was scooped out at one end to form a cone-shaped hole, about 4in. in diameter at the mouth, and about twice as long. This done, two holes were bored through the middle of the stump, one penetrating only to the hollowed-out cone, and the other right through to the other side. Into the end of the stump opposite to that which was hollowed out, a small sapling was fixed, to which were attached two strings, one of these ending in a running noose and the other plain. The sapling was then bent forward and the plain string forced right through the hole that had been bored through the stump at (a), and fastened at the far side with a knot. The noose string was passed through the forward hole at (b), and the noose arranged so that it lined the hole at this point. Bait was put beyond the first string at the extreme end of the cone-shaped hollow. When a rat smelled

the bait, it entered the cone, and on reaching the string through hole (a), found that this string was barring its passage to the bait, so it promptly gnawed through it. By doing so it released the spring sapling and the noose was drawn taut round the animal's neck and chest, thereby killing it.

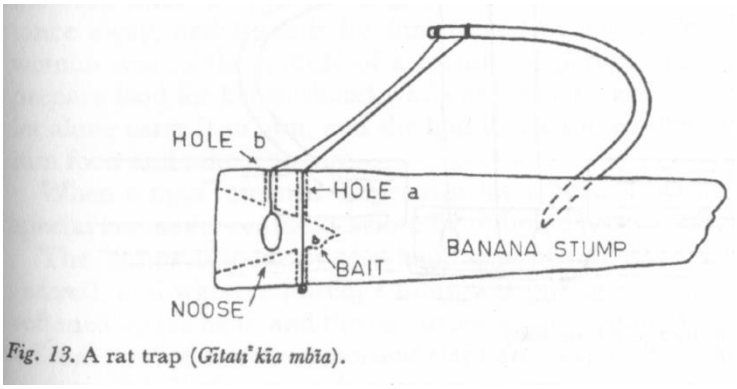

Fig. 13. A rat trap (*Gĩtatĩ kĩa mbĩa*).

***Gĩtatĩ kĩa Huko* (*Mole-rat Trap*)**

The Kikuyu trap used for catching mole-rats was a variant of the rat trap just described (Fig. 14). The first requisite was a hollow cylinder of wood and this was made either of bamboo, or else by hollowing out a piece of *mũkũngũgũ* or *mũtatĩ* wood. This cylinder would be about 8in. long with an internal diameter of about 2in. Three holes were then bored with a red-hot awl through the hollow cylinder, the middle one of them right through to the other side, and the one at either end through (p.476) one wall only. At each end of the inner surface of the cylinder, and about ½in. from the end, a narrow groove was carefully made. Next a sapling was cut and three strings were attached to it, one of them being passed right through the middle hole and knotted underneath. The other two strings had nooses made at their ends, and these, after being passed through end holes, were arranged in the grooves inside the ends of the cylinder.

The trapper then looked for a mole-rat infested area, where he dug down under one of the molehills, and exposed the tunnel. Here he set his cylinder inside the tunnel so that each end faced a part of it. The the sapling was then stuck into the ground so that it was bent and the strain taken on the middle string. As soon as a mole-rat came along its tunnel from either direction, it passed into the cylinder and found its way barred by a thin string, which it would gnaw through. This released the spring sapling, and as it flew back it drew both the nooses taut, so that no matter by which end the mole-rat had entered, one noose would catch it. This trap is very effective, and is still widely used today.

Poisons

Mention has been made in this chapter of the poison that was used for arrows and elephant harpoons by the Kikuyu hunters. This poison procured almost exclusively from the *mũricũ* plant, although the juice of a small rock plant called *gathũũri ka mahiga-ini* was added to the brew when the poison was being made, to make it of a stickier consistency.

The *mũricũ* shrub grew commonly in Kikuyu around Dagoretti and elsewhere. The roots, bark and smaller branches were chopped up small and then put into a special earthenware pot used exclusively for (p.477) poison. There they were boiled in water, more water being added from time to time, for about 12 hours. The water was then allowed to boil away, and it left a sticky black gum at the bottom of the pot. This gummy substance was carefully scrapped together while it was cooling and it was made up into oblong lumps, which, when cold, went hard.

When one brew was thus finished a second lot was put on the fire, and the poison brewers would spend two or three whole days doing nothing but preparing this poison, which they later would sell to other *aathi* and to the agricultural Kikuyu.

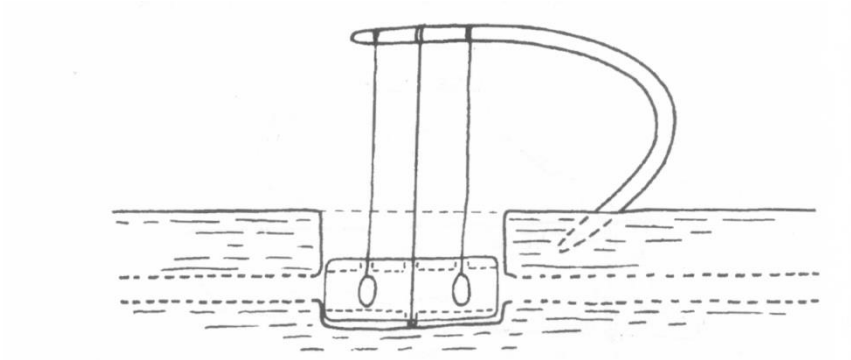

Fig. 14. A mole-rat trap (*Gĩtatĩ kĩa huko*).

The brewing of poison could not, by custom, be carried out in a village or anywhere near habitation sites. The poison brewers had to go into the bush and build a rough shelter to sleep in, or else go and dwell temporarily in a cave.

While brewing poison for arrows, the brewer might on no account have any sexual contact with their wives or any other woman, and no woman might come near the place where the poison was being prepared, or it would certainly be rendered ineffective. If a poison brewer required food, his wife might bring it each day to the vicinity of the cave or hut in the bush where he was working, but she had to put it down a little distance away, and leave it for him to collect when she had gone. If a woman was in the middle of a menstrual period, she could not even prepare food for her husband while he was engaged in brewing poison, let alone carry it to him, and she had to ask some other woman to cook him food and take it to him.

When a man returned home with his supply of poison there was no special ceremony required before he resumed normal life.

The lumps of poison were kept wrapped in soft pieces of leather (*ndamĩ*), and when required, a lump was put out in the sun until it was softened by the heat, and then a portion of the gummy substance scraped off and applied to the arrows and elephant harpoons as required.

A small ball of arrow poison about the size of a golf ball was valued at one ewe, and those who made good and effective poison did a brisk trade. If a man gave a fellow hunter poison, instead of selling it to him, he thereby became entitled to one *ndari*—piece of hide large enough for a shield—from each buffalo that his friend killed.

Poison of the kind made from *mũricũ* juice was not only used on arrows for shooting game, but also on the arrows which the older men used for fighting the Maasai when the Maasai raided Kikuyu country. Occasionally a man would accidentally wound another Kikuyu with a poisoned arrow, and in view of this the Kikuyu had experimented with antidotes. They claimed that if a man who had been wounded with poisoned arrow and could get hold of some *ngũnyi* seeds and some *mũtongu* berries,and (p.478) chew them quickly and swallow their juice, he had a good chance of recovery, because, "Those juices would cause serious trouble to one another". ('*Maĩ mau nĩmekũharana'*). In other words, the antidote to a blood poison was to take another poison of the internal kind, for the juice of *ngũnyi* seeds and of *mũtongu* berries were also highly poisonous. The effect of this treatment was that after an hour or two the patient vomited violently.

An alternative treatment for arrow poison was the stomach juices of a sheep or a goat. One of these animals would be killed as quickly as possible, its stomach contents removed, and the juices squeezed out of it, which the patient had to swallow.

The flesh round a poisoned arrow wound in an animal was cut out and thrown away. It was never eaten.

The *mũricũ* shrub was said to be so poisonous that if bees took too much honey from its flowers, the honey was poisoned and would make people who consumed it sick, and if they were at all weak in constitution it would kill them.

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Introduction

In South Kikuyu, prior to the great famine of 1898-1899, organised markets for trade between the peoples of one district and another, or for trade between the families of a single district, did not exist. Barter of goods was a private matter and everyone in every district knew enough about the affairs of others to know who had such things as hides, soda, tobacco, ochre, iron, or trade goods obtained from the Akamba, to dispose of. Even in respect of trade from other parts of Kikuyu country such as the Murang'a and Nyeri districts, the commodities such as *ira* powder and red ochre of good quality (*thĩrĩga*), were not brought to a market. Trading parties came south, established themselves at the homestead of a friend, and then spread the news that they had such wares for barter.

Before we examine details of internal trade, however, we will consider the Kikuyu organisation of foreign trade, that is, trade with neighbouring tribes—the Maasai and the Akamba—for, in spite of hostilities and raids, trade was never interrupted. All the tribes regarded trade as essential to their welfare, and as something that was quite outside the sphere of military activities, and therefore not to be affected by it.

Trade with the Maasai

Between the Kikuyu and the Maasai there was a long-standing agreement that parties of women of either tribe could go into the territory of the other tribe unmolested, provided that they were on a trading expedition. In actual practice, this agreement meant that Kikuyu trading parties went continuously into Maasai country, but Maasai parties came very seldom into Kikuyu country, for the Maasai hated carrying loads, and a trade expedition to Kikuyu country involved not only carrying skins for barter, but carrying back food supplies. Maasai women, therefore, much preferred that the trade should be left mainly in the hands of the Kikuyu. Only when a severe

drought had reduced the Maasai supplies of milk and blood, so much that the children were starving, would Maasai women undertake a trade expedition and the hardships that it involved.

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Women Traders

A party of Kikuyu women who wished to go trading in Maasai country had to have one or more interpreters with them, and fortunately there were plenty of women in Kikuyu country who were more or less bilingual. These Kikuyu women who could speak Maasai were drawn from two groups. Either they were Maasai girls who had married Kikuyu men and who had thus become Kikuyu in all but origin, but who, of course spoke both languages, or they were Kikuyu girls who had been taken prisoners by the Maasai as children, but who, after several years in Maasai country, had either been ransomed or recaptured. These bilingual women were called by the Kikuyu *hinga*, which means hypocrites or dissemblers, because they could appear to belong to either side, and they acted not only as interpreters to the other Kikuyu women, but also as guides. The actual leader of almost every Kikuyu trading expedition was an elderly *hinga*.

No unmarried girls or young women were ever allowed to go on trade expedition, for a variety of reasons. In the first place, the Kikuyu elders forbade it because they feared that young, attractive Kikuyu girls and women might be made love to by the Maasai warriors and might easily be persuaded not to return home. Secondly, children could obviously not taken on such an expedition, and young married women with young children could not leave them behind alone, unless they had daughters old enough to be responsible for looking after them and cooking for them. Thirdly, it was considered unlucky for girls and young women to go on long journeys into foreign lands, for fear of evil eye or other curses. On the whole, therefore, no woman went on a trading expedition until she was old enough to be one of the *aka arĩa maruithĩtie*, that is, the women who had had at least one child initiated.

Organising a Trade Expedition

Every trade expedition was actually planned by the women, and when a woman—usually one of the older *hinga*—started making plans for an expedition, she told all the women in her district that she was doing so, so that any who wished to join the party might make their own arrangements and prepare trade goods. If a woman, or several women from one village, wanted to join the forthcoming party, they would tell their (p.481) husbands, and the men concerned would go to the medicine-man and get him to divine whether the occasion was propitious for their women to go or not. If any man received a negative answer he would forbid his women to join the party, for although the expedition would not set out at all unless the leader had obtained a favourable opinion from her own diviner, it might well happen that the expedition, although generally favourable, was unfavourable for certain families, and only the family's own medicine-man could ascertain this.

As soon as a woman who wished to go trading had been informed by her husband that the auspices were good, she hastened to prepare the necessary trade goods. Meanwhile, the *hinga* who was going to lead the party went to her own family medicine-man, and she first asked him to divine whether the omens were favourable for the particular expedition she had in mind. If they were, she arranged with him to come to her home on a given day and there *thondeka* her (perform a magic rite to ensure her safety and success). She gave him some Magadi soda and a goat skin, and also a young male goat (*kĩrũhĩ*), which the medicine-man slaughtered and used to *thiũrũra* (encircle) her homestead. He then prepared a charm for her somewhat similar to that used by the *athigani* (scouts or spies) who led warriors' raiding parties, and he also provided her with little packages of various

magic powders for use on the journey to avert danger from wild animals, to make the Maasai keen to barter, and to make the journey safe and prosperous in all other respects.

The *hinga* who was organising the party had full powers as leader, but she would ask her medicine-man (or send her husband to do so) to advise her what route to take, and to tell her what omens to regard as bad and what omens as favourable. She also asked him to fix the actual day on which the expedition should start out. When all her plans were made, she told the women who had decided to join the party what day to assemble, and where to do so, and also how many days she reckoned they would be away, so that they could carry sufficient food for the journey, in addition to trade goods.

The principal trade goods which the Maasai were anxious to obtain were dried banana flour, *njahĩ* beans, maize, sorghum flour, green bananas, sugar-cane, tobacco (for chewing), and honey. All these things, except honey, were wrapped into parcels or rolls, in banana bark fibre, and such a bundle was called a *rũtũndũ*. Alternatively, the commodities were packed in small, string bags, which were fastened over the top with banana bark. Packages of this type were called *mburungo* (bundless).

In addition to the above mentioned foods, the Maasai were keen to obtain Kikuyu earthenware cooking pots of the type used for making (p.482) soup (*njuuri*), and also water pitchers (*ndigithũ*), so some women took these as trade goods, filling them with corn and flour for the journey. The bundles of trade goods and the pots were always packed in big, open-weave carrier baskets called *ngara*.

Besides carrying her trade goods, each woman carried a big string bag of food for the journey, including sweet potatoes and maize cobs for roasting, and a certain quantity of cold cooked food. To this ration each woman added a long narrow gourd (*gĩtete*) for water, and a second one containing some concentrated gruel. The leader always carried a small earthenware pot with four lugs pierced for string handles. In this she kept hot embers, which were used each night to light a fire to cook by, and which were replenished before starting off again next morning.

The leader, by long established custom, demanded that each woman who was joining the trading party provide a fee, consisting of one banana bark bundle of some trade article such as flour, maize, or beans, and on the day that the party assembled for the start of the journey (*rũgendo*), she held a formal collection (*mũhothi*), at which time each woman handed over her fee to the leader. Having formally received her fee from each woman, the leader then handed it back to the contributor asking her to carry it for her, as she naturally had her own load of trade goods to carry, and could not possibly carry 30 or 40 other bundles as well.

The Journey

When the party had assembled, they set off, every woman being heavily loaded. Each one was, in fact, carrying goods weighing from l00 to 150lbs, for in addition to the trade goods, they all started off with enough food to last for three weeks to a month.

When a Kikuyu trading party set out it always followed one of the big recognised "trade routes" which led from Kikuyu country into Maasai country, and therefore had no difficulty in getting into the heart of Maasai country. Once there, however, the guides were essential, as only they were likely to know the Maasai water-holes where the Maasai villages would be found. Moreover, as the Maasai villages were constantly moved, the guides had to be people who had lived long enough

in Maasai country to know the location of the different sites which were used at different times of the year.

Every evening during their travels, just before sunset, they would quickly build a small thorn fence in the form of a circular enclosure and collect firewood. They then slept on the ground in the open, round a fire. (p.483) They had no male escort, for a male who accompanied such an expedition would not be safe, as the trade agreement giving safe pass to the trading expeditions did not allow men as members of the party, as they would obviously be tempted to use such opportunities for spying. Any man who was seen with such a trade expedition would, therefore, be attacked and killed by the Maasai.

In spite of having no male escort, these Kikuyu women quite happily spent the night in the open in lion-infested country, because of the great faith they had in the charms which their leader had obtained from the medicine-man, and, apart from the fires and the small thorn fence—which would certainly not have kept out lion and other wild beasts—the only precaution taken each night was to encircle (*thiũrũra*) the enclosure in which they slept with the *gĩthitũ* charm. This, they believed, gave them absolute security, and so they could sleep without fear.

These trading expeditions used to penetrate into Maasai country as far as the shores of Lake Naivasha in the north-west, as far as Narok in the west, and as far as Kajiado to the south.

When they reached the area where the Maasai encampments were, they were met by bands of Maasai warriors, who escorted the Kikuyu women in parties of two and three to the various Maasai villages. Here they became the guests of the Maasai women while the bartering took place.

On arrival in the area where the Maasai villages were, every member of the trade party once again handed over her "fee" to the leader, so that leader was able to obtain three or four times as much barter goods as any other member of the party. As leader, she also had the right to make each member of the party help her carry back the things which she obtained with her fees.

The principal objects which the Kikuyu women sought in exchange for their trade goods were sewn leather skin cloaks, untanned goat and sheep skins, brass and copper wire and beads (which the Maasai obtained by trade from the Arabs and the Swahilis and also from the Akamba), cowrie shells (also obtained by the Maasai from coast traders), goats, sheep and calves. As far as the livestock was concerned, Kikuyu women would not accept these as barter if they had journeyed far into Maasai country, as they did not like the responsibility of bringing herds of stock back through lion-infested country, but if they had journeyed only two or three days' march into Maasai country they would gladly accept them as payment for their goods.

After the trading was finished the women reassembled for the journey back to the Kikuyu country.

Before a trade expedition started out into Maasai country the leader (p.484) tied an identical number of knots in two strings to represent the number of days she expected her party to be away. She took one of these strings with her and untied one knot each night; the other string she left at home, and one of its knots was untied each night. When the knots were nearly all untied and only about three left, her husband sent messages to the relatives of those who had gone on the expedition, telling them that the party was almost due back, and then a band of warriors, accompanied by other women, would set out for the Kikuyu-Maasai border to await the return of the party on the "trade route" from which they had set out. As soon as they saw the travellers in the distance they would go out and meet them with fresh food and water, and help them carry home their loads.

Men Traders

In spite of the fact that the agreement between the Kikuyu and the Maasai made no allowance for men to go on trading expeditions with impunity, there were exceptions to this rule, and three men are famed in the Kikuyu traditional history of the nineteenth century as successful leaders of many trade expeditions. These men were Karau wa Mũthigani, Waithaka wa Mathia, and Gĩtangu wa Gathimba. These three men had each lived for quite a long time in Maasai country and had made friends with individual Maasai elders in many areas. They trusted this fact to give them security, and neither one of them was ever attacked by Maasai spear-blooding warrior bands, although these were certainly entitled to attack them, as far as the terms of the agreement were concerned.

It was the man called Waithaka, mentioned above, who originated the practice of paying a fee to the leader of a trading expedition, whence the origin of the name of this fee, *ndũma ya Waithaka* (an edible arum for Waithaka). This name was later applied to all fees payable by any person who was conducted and guided into any area outside Kikuyu territory for any purpose whatever, whether hunting, raiding or trading.

It was a common and recognised custom that the armies of the Kikuyu and the Maasai made use of trading parties as a means of exchanging challenges. The Kikuyu or the Maasai warriors would send a message, for instance, to the effect that they intended to raid a particular area, or that they planned to come and rescue a prisoner. Or again, they would send offers of or demands for ransom.

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It was common knowledge that trade parties often made use of their opportunities to do some spying, but in spite of this the trading parties were never molested, for it was against the interests of both parties to break relations. In particular, the Maasai were always badly in need of things which they could obtain only from the Kikuyu, such as vegetable foods certain magic powders (like *rũthuko*), and tobacco.

Disposal of Trade Goods obtained from the Maasai

When a trade expedition returned from Maasai country, each woman took the things which she had obtained by trade to her own home, where she handed them over to her husband, if he was alive, or her eldest son, if he was not. This surrender of the property to the man did not mean that the woman renounced her absolute right to it, but rather signified her acceptance of the fact that her husband, or eldest son, was better able to take charge of it and control it. There was a recognised law that the sheep, goats, and stock resulting from such trade—whether in the form of actual live animals brought from Maasai country, or animals acquired in exchange for skins, leather cloaks, etc. that had been brought back—could be used only for the benefit of the woman herself and for her children and household. They could not in any circumstances be diverted by a husband or a son to the use of the family as a whole or to any other wife or stepmother, unless the woman who had obtained them gave her consent.

Maasai Children brought back by Trading Parties

Sometimes, especially in times of food shortage and of great drought in Maasai country, Maasai women would hand over their children to the Kikuyu women who had gone trading, in exhange for food. This was not any sense a question of selling their children as slaves, for these children, if they survived, did not become slaves, but fully adopted members of the Kikuyu family, with identical rights to those of the Kikuyu-born children. A Maasai woman who found herself and her family faced with starvation would argue, "With things as they are, unless I do something drastic,

both I and my children will die. Therefore (p.486) it is better for all of us that I should exchange one child for food, and thus we shall all have a chance of life. For, with the food I am given, I and my other children can perchance survive until the famine is over, and the child that I give to the Kikuyu will also live, for that child will go to a land of plenty".

Ordinarily, Kikuyu women would not accept Maasai male children in this way, because they held that a boy might, when he grew up, remember that he was a Maasai by birth, and therefore turn into a spy against the family of his foster parents. Female children, however, were always gladly accepted in return for food, and when a girl was handed over to a Kikuyu woman, the following ceremonies had to be enacted.

The Kikuyu woman would insist that she could not take the child unless she came with her mother's blessing, as otherwise she might bring evil with her. A ceremony of blessing therefore took place. The Kikuyu woman and the child she was about to adopt from the Maasai woman both stand in front of the Maasai woman and hold their hands together to form a sort of cup. Then the Maasai woman would take mouthfuls of *nyeki ya kĩgombe* (Kikuyu grass), chew them, and spit out the grass into the cupped hands of the Kikuyu woman and the child she was handing over. At the same time she would be required to make a statement to this effect, "Take my child and may she love you. She now becomes your own child born of your own womb and I give her to you with my blessing upon you and upon her".

It was essential, too, that the child's father be a party to the transfer, except in the case of a Maasai woman who had for some reason become a kind of outcast, and was found wandering alone with her child or children in the bush or on the plains. A Maasai father would very rarely withhold his consent if the famine were severe, for he too would prefer that he and his wife and the rest of the family should have a chance to live, as well as the child they were parting with, rather than that all of them should die of starvation.

Adoption Ceremonies for a Maasai Child

As soon as a woman who had thus adopted a Maasai girl child arrived back in Kikuyu country, she went to her husband's homestead and there a series of ceremonies had to be performed in order that the child should become a legal and full member of the family. These were not the ordinary "adoption" ceremonies such as were performed if an adult man of any other tribe sought adoption, but were as follows.

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As soon as the woman informed her husband that she had brought back a Maasai child, the man had to slaughter a ram as a sacrifice for a woman has given birth to a child (*ngoima ya mũciairĩ*). The woman and the child were placed in the woman's own hut, and the father summoned two or three council elders to come and assist him in the adoption ceremony. When the ram had been slaughtered and cut up, these elders prepared four rawhide strips, two from the stomach of the ram and two from a portion of its skin. Meanwhile, some of the meat of the ram was put to roast, and when it was roasted the woman and the Maasai child were summoned to come out of the hut. Outside the hut they both had to sit down, and one of the elders went to sit on one side of them, and one on the other. These men put two rawhide strips, one of each kind on the woman's left hand, and likewise two on to the left hand of the child.

Then the woman and child had to re-enter the hut and sit down there, while the husband and one elder took the left *ikengeto* (half-saddle joint) from the roasted meat and cut it into four pieces,

which were put into a half-gourd and taken into the hut. The husband and elder then withdrew, while the woman ate two pieces of the meat and the child the other two. After a short pause, to give time for the meat to be eaten, the husband would call out, "Have you eaten the meat?" (*'Nĩmũrĩĩte nyama?'*), and having been answered in the affirmative, he and the elders proceeded to eat the meat of the right-hand *ikengeto*. This done, those joints of the ram that were normally boiled were handed over to one of the woman's co-wives, or some other female member of the homestead, to prepare soup for the "woman and her baby", and the rest of the roasted meat was divided among the members of the homestead, so that all should partake in the adoption.

Meanwhile, the council elders squeezed the undigested stomach contents of the ram carefully so that all the stomach juices were collected in a small cooking pot. To this was added some of the fat that had been rendered down as soon as the animal had been cut up, and some water, and the whole mixture was thoroughly stirred. Then it was boiled, together with leaves of the *mũthigiũ* bush, after which the concoction was strained through bracken fern leaves and grass. Then a little of the blood that was drawn off the animal when it was slaughtered was added, and the brew was stirred (*bĩra*). The father first drank a little of this concotion to make sure it was all right, then the mother drank some, and the rest was given to the adopted child.

This drink acted as a mild purgative, and its object was to wash out the inside of the child and remove all the traces and influences of Maasai food. For the next few days the adopted child and the mother had to eat (p.488) nothing but boiled meat of the sacrificial animal, and soup made from the meat. This ended the first part of the ceremonies, and the child then started to live the normal life of a Kikuyu child as a member of the family.

The next ceremony did not take place until the child had been a year or more in the family, and had been adapting well to the new conditions, and was growing strong and healthy. Then the father called in the medicine-man to perform a ceremony to change the child from a Maasai into a Kikuyu (*kũgarũra kaana, akarute Gĩũkabi agacokie Gigĩkũyũ*). The ceremony in full, as described below, was regarded as necessary only if the family into which the child was being adopted belonged to the Kikuyu initiation guild. If, on the other hand, the family belonged to the Ũkabi guild, a less complex ceremony was performed, and this will be described afterwards.

The ceremony of turning a Maasai-born child into a full Kikuyu child according to the Kikuyu initiation guild was conducted as follows. The father provided young animal that had not yet had sexual intercourse—a young ram, ewe, or she-goat (but, for some unexplained reason, not a he-goat). This animal was handed over to the medicine-man who was to perform the "changing ceremony", and he called in one or two council elders to come and slaughter it for him, and generally assist him and act as witnesses. The sacrificial animal was slaughtered out in the bush not far from the homestead, and as soon as it had been cut up, the medicine-man took the undigested stomach contents (*taatha*) and intestines, and led the child down to the nearest stream, leaving the elders preparing the flesh of the animal for roasting. At the stream the medicine-man constructed two small "huts" from branches of bushes, one on the far side of the stream, and one on the same side as the child's new home, and each of these huts had two entrances, one facing the child's new home, and one opposite on the far side. The medicine-man then collected the various leaves necessary for the *ndahĩkio* (purification) ceremony, and made a banana leaf basin, into which he put the *taatha*, with some water and a variety of magic powders (for details see Chapter 26). He also put the animal's intestines all round the hut on the far side of the stream to represent the Maasai mother's period of childbirth. That hut now represented the child's old Maasai home. When all was in readiness, the medicine-man made the child enter this Maasai hut from the furthest

back entrance, and he himself squatted at this entrance while he cleansed (*tahĩkia*) the child from behind. Then he came to the front entrance of the Maasai hut and here he again cleansed the child, who now was made to come out of the "Maasai" hut across the stream and enter the hut representing its new Kikuyu home. At this stage the medicine-man (p.489) destroyed the "Maasai" hut, and proceeded to cleanse the child all over again, the first from the back entrance of the Kikuyu hut and then from the front entrance. This done, the child was allowed to emerge from the Kikuyu hut, which was also destroyed, and he took the child up the hill to where the animal had been sacrificed for this second stage of the "changing" ceremony.

Having arrived back at the place of sacrifice, they found that the elders, acting on the instructions of the medicine-man, had brought a long pole of *mũthakwa* wood, and also the stem of a banana tree that was a *mori* or "virgin" (i.e. that had not yet given birth to a flower or a banana bunch). The *mũthakwa* pole had to be about 2in. in diameter and had to have all its leaves and branches left on; the banana tree stem had to be of the *mũtahato* variety and had to have its leafy top intact.

The medicine-man then dug a hole in the ground by a pathway that was not in general use, but which had been much used in the past, and which led in the direction of the homestead where the child had been adopted. Into the hole, the bases of the *mũthakwa* pole and the banana tree stem were firmly planted together, and this done, the medicine-man used a sword to split both the *mũthakwa* pole and the banana stem through the middle so that the two halves could be pulled apart to make an "eye" through which the child would presently have to pass. Next he took long strips from the stomach of the ram, and also the intestines, which had been brought up again from the stream, and these strips were hung in such a way that they came down on either side of the *mũthakwa* pole and banana tree stem.

Now the medicine-man called two of the council elders to come and help him, and they were instructed to hold the split stems apart so as to make a gap through which the child could pass. The child was instructed to pass one leg and her head through the gap so made, and the medicine-man stood at the opposite side. As soon as the child's head was through, he presented his thumb covered with *ira* powder for the child to lick, and then he rubbed some of the same powder on both of the child's temples and on her throat.

Next the child was told to crawl right through the gap in the stems, and when she was standing on the other side, the child had more powder rubbed on her breast, navel, and the nails of both big toes. This done, she was told to go at once to her adopted mother's hut, where the mother rubbed castor oil over the places where the *ira* powder had been put on her. (This was called *kũruria ira*, to wipe off the *ira*). She also gave the child food to eat, thus ending the ceremony as far as the child was concerned.

Meanwhile, the medicine-man took the strips of stomach and intestines (p.490) off the *mũthakwa* and banana tree, and pulled these poles up out of the hole, and split each of them right up into two complete and separate halves. With these two halves of the banana stem, two halves of the *mũthakwa* tree, the intestines, and the stomach, he solemnly walked into the bush, where he threw them away, at the same time saying: "*Ndagarũra Ũkabi na nyũmba iria ciarĩ cia Ũkabi, ndagũtua rĩu Mũgĩkũyũ*". ('I change the Maasai, and the huts that were of the Maasai, and I now make you into a Kikuyu.') The meat of the sacrificial animal was then eaten by the medicine-man (who took the skin as his fee), the child's adopted father, and the council elders, who were assistants and witnesses at the ceremony.

The child was then a full member of the family in every sense, and soon after this she went through the second birth ceremony, exactly as if she had been borne by her adopted mother. From now on, she was in all respects treated as, and spoken of as, a natural child of her adopted mother and father.

If a child had been obtained on a trading expedition in the manner described above, and her adopted mother and father belonged to that section of the Kikuyu who were initiated by Ũkabi guild rites, then the ceremonies were less complex. All that was necessary was the slaughtering of a ram on the child's first arrival for the preliminary adoption as already described, and later a medicine-man was called in to cleanse (*tahĩkia*) the child, and so remove from her any evil influences of Maasai life that might be clinging to her, and any desire she might otherwise have to return later to Maasai country. Such a child did not have to be changed from a Maasai into a Kikuyu, for those who belonged to the Ũkabi guild regarded themselves as sufficiently akin to the Maasai for this to be unnecessary.

Occasionally, when on a trading expedition, the Kikuyu women would come across a Maasai woman, with or without a child or children, who had been abandoned by the Maasai when they were moving from one district to another because of her inability to keep up with the main party. Such a woman would often plead with the Kikuyu to let her join them and go home with them to Kikuyu country, in which case she would be attached to one of the Kikuyu women. When this woman, with or without children, was brought into Kikuyu country of her own free will and not as a prisoner, she was taken into a Kikuyu family as a sort of concubine to the husband of the woman to whom she was attached. Neither she nor her children were adopted, for she was regarded as *itaha* (the spoils of a raid), even though she came voluntarily. The ceremony performed, therefore, was similar to that which accompanied the bringing home of cattle that had been raided. A ram was slaughtered (p.491) and the woman and her "captor" both had to walk across the stomach contents of the ram mixed with *mahoroha* leaves. Other than this there was no special ceremony.

***Markets for Trade with Maasai* (*Kwara Ing'ang'a—Arranging Markets*)**

In addition to the trade expeditions into Maasai country which have been described above, there were periods of peace with the Maasai when trade was carried out by arranging markets where the Maasai and Kikuyu could meet at regular intervals for trade purposes.

Instead of describing the method of negotiating such peace treaties in the chapter on warfare, the negotiations are described here, because such treaties were made exclusively in connection with trade requirements.

From time to time a severe drought in Maasai country would make the position of their tribe precarious, and when famine threatened, the Maasai would decide that it was time to make peace with the Kikuyu, so that trade could be made more general and starvation averted. Such peace treaties were never negotiated at the request of the Kikuyu, but were always initiated by the Maasai.

First of all, the Maasai would send one or two women who spoke Kikuyu, with instructions to go to the villages of some of the leading Kikuyu elders and make an appointment, suggesting that on an agreed day a peace delegation would come to Kikuyu by such-and-such a route. The Kikuyu elders would then select a day on which the Maasai delegation should come, and send a message back to this effect. On the appointed day, four unarmed Kikuyu elders from each of the major territorial units would go down to the Maasai-Kikuyu border to await the Maasai delegation.

The Maasai also came in groups of four elders, four for each of the major Kikuyu territorial units with whom they were going to negotiate. Each party of four Maasai elders had to bring with them the *mũrĩca* (tokens of peace). They had to have with them a young girl with her body anointed all over with butterfat and red ochre and wearing a string of blue beads, and she had to be accompanied by her mother, who had to have *ira* powder on her face, as had the Maasai elders. Also, each mother and daughter accompanying a party of four Maasai elders had to be carrying some butterfat, a bleeding arrow, a branding iron, a pair of sandals, a bunch of grass, and a gourd of milk. These were the tokens of (p.492) peace, and so long as they carried them, the Maasai party could not be molested. The girl and her mother were themselves also a sign of peace, and so long as the men were accompanied by them, their lives were sacred, even though the peace treaty had not yet been made.

When the Kikuyu delegation met the Maasai negotiators at the border, they all sat down for a parley, and the Maasai, through a spokesman who could speak Kikuyu, addressed the Kikuyu to the effect that they had famine in their land and that they wanted to make a peace treaty and have free trade so that their children should not all perish of hunger. The Kikuyu delegation then addressed the Maasai through the medium of a Kikuyu who could speak Maasai, and they said in reply "Yes, we will make peace with you and open markets for you but not until we have made a peace in such a manner that anyone who breaks it will be accursed and will not live. We must make a peace so binding that your warriors will not dare to attack us, and ours will not dare to attack you, for we old men are willing to have peace, but perchance our warriors and yours would rather not".

After parleying for some time, the Kikuyu would usually agree to continue negotiations, and if they did, then each party of four Kikuyu elders would take one of the Maasai parties of four elders, with the girl and her mother who were accompanying them, and would return to their own territorial unit (*rũgongo*) for the night, taking their guests to the homestead of the most important Kikuyu elder of that unit. When they arrived at the village in which such a homestead was situated, the council elders of the whole territorial unit concerned were called together to perform the necessary ceremonies. A fat ram was killed and its fat rendered down for immediate use. The Kikuyu produced a series of objects similar to those brought by the Maasai—though not a girl and her mother—and these were laid beside the objects brought by Maasai. Then the Kikuyu elders sprinkled the rendered fat of the ram over the Maasai elders, the girl, and her mother, to "wipe away" (*ruria*) the *ira* powder, and they also sprinkled fat over the objects that the Maasai had brought with them. The Maasai, for their part, chewed grass and spat it upon the Kikuyu elders and upon their things, and then the Maasai and the Kikuyu ate the meat of the ram together. Next the Kikuyu killed a he-goat and provided beer for a feast for the Maasai elders, and this sealed the preliminary negotiations as far as the elders were concerned.

The Maasai were similarly treated in each territorial unit, and then they all returned home. Each party took with them a string with a series of knots in it to mark the day upon which they were to return with many other elders, and accompanied by a body of warriors, to meet the (p.493) Kikuyu at a given spot on the borders of the two countries for the final ceremony of peace-making.

Meanwhile, as soon as the Massai delegation had gone home, the Kikuyu elders of each area summoned a series of *kibaata* dances in the various territorial areas in order that they might inform the people of the country as a whole, of the peace that was about to be made. At each of these big *kibaata* dances, when the people of the whole area had assembled to watch the performances, the Kikuyu elders would interrupt the dance and then put up a spokesman to inform the gathering of

what they had done. They would say, "We senior elders have agreed to a peace with the Maasai, and we have appointed a day for them to meet us at such-and-such a place (usually a place called Mũthangari, the present location of St Austin's church), in order that we may take a solemn oath with them. We want a party of warriors and many elders to accompany us on the day and witness the taking of the oath and sealing of the treaty".

Then they would add the words, "*Tondũ nĩtwaciarana na Ũkabi, mũndũ ũkoragana aroũra ũũ*". ('Since we have made an adoption ceremony with the Maasai, may any person who causes a death be lost thus.') All the people would chant in response, "*Aroũra ũũ*" ('May he be lost thus'), and with that the spokesman would hurl his staff into the bush.

Meanwhile, the Maasai who had returned to their own country let their people know the outcome of the negotiations in whatever way they were accustomed to do so.

On the appointed day a great body of Kikuyu elders, accompanied by an army of Kikuyu warriors, repaired to the place that had been appointed for the sealing of the treaty. They took with them a young ewe and a young ram. The Maasai for their part also brought a young ewe and a ram. The ewes were to be slain to "seal the treaty", and solemn oaths were made upon them, and the rams were to provide stomach contents to be stepped over when the parties separated to go home.

When both parties arrived at the place chosen for this meeting, the warriors of each side were made to remain at some distance while the elders advanced and met. The Kikuyu elders handed over the ewe which they had brought to the Maasai and the Maasai handed theirs to the Kikuyu. The ceremony of taking the oath of peace was now performed in the following manner. The ewe which the Kikuyu had been given by the Maasai was seized, its legs were bound tightly together, and it was laid upon the ground. Then five special staves were laid upon the bound animal to represent the five oaths that the Kikuyu were going to take. When all was ready an elderly Kikuyu came forward with a knife, surrounded by the leading Kikuyu elders, and the leaders of the warriors (*njama*). This man was to take the oaths on behalf of all the people. He (p.494) took the knife, stooped down and drew it across the throat of the ewe, and at the same time took the first oath in the following terms, "*Ithuĩ tũngĩkaũraga Ũkabi tũrotuĩka ũguo* ('As for us, if we should kill Maasai may we become like this (sheep) is'). He then repeated the movement, drawing his knife across the throat of the ewe again, and took the second oath, "*Ũkabi rĩu ũtatuĩka Ũgĩkũyũ, na ithuĩ tũtatuĩka Ũkabi tũtarĩ a nyina ũmwe, mũndũ ũkona ng'ombe cia Ũkabi na ndacokie, ũcio arotuĩka ũguo*". ('As for the Maasai, if now they have not become of the Kikuyu stock, and if we have not become of the Maasai stock, if we are not now as children of one mother, let any man who sees cattle of the Maasai and who does not return them, let that man become as this (sheep) is.'). Then he again drew his knife across the ewe's throat and said, "*Mũndũ ũkona Mũũkabi arĩ wiki gĩthaka amũũrage amũhithe, ũcio arotuĩka ũguo*". (Let any man who sees a Maasai by himself in the bush and who kills him and hides the fact, let him become as this (sheep) is'). As he drew the knife the fourth time the oath was, "*Ũrĩa ũngĩĩhia ũhoro ũyũ witũ na Ũkabi arotuĩka, ũgũo*". ('Let any person who may destroy the peace which is now ours and the Maasai's, let him become as this (sheep) is'). The fifth and final oath was an oath of vengeance if the Maasai should break their word, and it was, "*Ũkabi ũngĩkaũraga ithuĩ mũndũ witũ, na ithuĩ tũtakaroka kũmacaria tũmaũrage tũrokua ũguo*". ('If the Maasai should by chance kill any of our number, and if we do not the very next day go out to seek them and kill them, then may we die thus'). With this last oath he severed the throat of the ewe with a flourish of his knife.

Next the Maasai elders took a similar series of oaths with the ewe supplied by the Kikuyu. This done, each party selected men to carry away the carcasses of the ewes that had been killed, and hide them secretly and securely in some place where they would not be eaten by scavenging animals.

This ceremony having been completed, the Kikuyu fixed a day for the first market to take place, and each party then killed the ram that had brought with them, sprinkled its stomach contents on the ground, stepped over them, and so went home.

When each party of Kikuyu delegates arrived home they killed a goat, and the elders put rawhide strips on their own and the warriors' middle right-hand fingers so as to release (*ohora*) them from any evil effect the ceremony might have had on them. All those who attended the ceremony were, moreover, bound to abstain from any sexual intercourse until that moon had waned and a new moon appeared.

The Kikuyu elders who had been at the oath-taking ceremony then gave orders for the holding of a further series of *kibaata* dances all over the country, and they and the warriors who were at the oath-taking ceremony (p.495) attended these dances. First of all they repeated to all the assembly, the five oaths that have been taken on their behalf. As the ewe was no longer present, however, the oaths ended slightly differently, this time with the words, "May we perish thus!".

After each oath had been repeated, every person present chanted the final words of the oath, "May we perish thus!", making it his own. Then the elders announced that, starting on such-and-such a day, there would be held a market for trade between the Kikuyu and the Maasai at the place appointed—usually either at Mũthangari, Mahiga ma Kibe, or at Nyangumu—and upon every fourth or sixth day after that (according to what had been agreed). The people then dispersed and prepared food and other things for the first great day of the market.

On the opening day of these markets, a number of Kikuyu elders made a point of attending, and of inviting Maasai elders to come back home with them as a sign to all of the deep nature of the peace, and some Maasai likewise took Kikuyu elders home as their guests. The Kikuyu warriors also went to the markets, but they might not take their shields, which were a sign of war. They might take their spears and swords, however, as these were used also for attacking wild beasts. Here they met Maasai warriors, friendships grew, and the Maasai warriors invited the Kikuyu warriors to their meat feasts, and *vice versa*.

Peace and an inter-tribal market having thus been established, a period of trade of great benefit to both sides was initiated, and lasted for a period of anything from one to ten years or more, with trade going on all the while.

The friendships that resulted from these peace treaties were so deep that it was not uncommon for parties of Maasai warriors to be invited to spend a whole dancing season in Kikuyu country as guests of the Kikuyu warriors, who would teach them their own dances and allow them the privilege of having Kikuyu girls as "sleeping partners" at night.

Such treaties of peace would be brought to an end sooner or later, however, either through an accident, or through a deliberate act of hostility. In the first instance, a Kikuyu or a Maasai warrior might lose his temper over something, and, in spite of the oaths, kill a member of the other tribe. If his family refused to make retribution, this would be the signal for hostilities to start again, but if the death was due to a genuine accident, and the aggressor's family immediately made a payment of "blood money", as they would if a Kikuyu had killed a Kikuyu, all was well.

Usually it was not an accident that led to the end of peace, however, but a deliberate act. After a time, one or other side would get tired of peace and so take steps to end the treaty. The Kikuyu who had taken the (p.496) oaths, and any member of that section of the tribe, could not deliberately break the treaty agreements without running the risk of having death and disaster come upon them and their family, as a result of the oath. Therefore, if the Kikuyu decided to end the peace they would call in an individual from north of the Chania River who was, therefore, not affected by the oath, and they would arrange for him to come and kill a Maasai.

Once the treaty was deliberately broken and hostilities resumed, the oath ceased to have any effect, although, as a precaution, the elders would go and unearth the carcass of the ewe over which the oath had been made, and would perform a *kũhorohia* ceremony, which annulled the oath. This was done by killing a ram and sprinkling its stomach contents upon the bones of the ewe. Similarly, the Maasai, if they wished to end the treaty, would get a Maasai warrior from some other Maasai district where the oath was not binding, and arrange for him to open hostilities.

Trade with the Akamba

The only other tribe that was a neighbour of the South Kikuyu was that of the Akamba, a people living a life similar to that of the Kikuyu and with language and customs that, in broad outlines, were not very different from those of their Kikuyu neighbours. In spite of this, or possibly because of it, the Kikuyu and the Akamba never made any trade agreements, and never arranged markets for inter-tribal trade.

Raiding between the two tribes was, as we shall see, rare and spasmodic, and was mainly confined to small raids by Akamba warriors in search of women and girls whom they could sell as slaves to the Arab traders who came regularly to their country.

Seeing that both tribes were agricultural, there was little in the way of produce that either tribe wanted from the other, except in times of famine. A serious famine affecting the Kikuyu usually affected the Akamba too, although the reverse was not necessarily true, as Kikuyu country on the whole had a higher rainfall and better permanent water in the form of springs and streams.

Though neither tribe had much in the way of produce which the other wanted in normal years, the Kikuyu were always anxious to obtain the copper, brass, beads, and cloth that the Akamba were able to get so much more easily than the Kikuyu, owing to their being nearer to the coast, from whence these trade goods were brought by Arab and Swahili caravans.

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The Akamba, on the other hand, were glad to get hold of the quantities of ivory that the Kikuyu obtained hunting elephants in the forest zones of their country, for the Akamba needed ivory to exchange for copper and brass and other goods with the traders. The Akamba tribe, therefore, acted as middlemen between the Kikuyu and the Arab traders, to the great advantage of the Akamba, and to the detriment of both the Kikuyu and the traders, for on the one hand the traders would have given the Kikuyu more goods in exchange for their ivory if the trade had been direct, and on the other hand the traders would have found that the Kikuyu put a much higher value on copper, brass, and beads than the Akamba did, and so would have accepted less in proportion for the ivory which they sold.

Owing to their position as middlemen, a position which they were anxious to retain, the Akamba did not encourage the Kikuyu to bring down their ivory down to Kamba country, but preferred to go into Kikuyu country and fetch it for themselves, for they knew that once the Kikuyu came into

direct contact with the traders and realised how much in the way of trade goods the Arabs were prepared to give for a tusk, the Kikuyu would no longer be willing to sell to the Akamba so cheaply.

Because both tribes belonged to the Bantu speaking group and had similar customs, there was a fair amount of inter-marriage between the Kikuyu and the Akamba, so when Kamba trading parties wanted to come into Kikuyu country for ivory, they would first of all communicate with a Kikuyu who had a Kamba wife, through the medium of the relations-in-law.

Apart from these marriage relationships between some Kikuyu and Kamba families, it was not uncommon for Kikuyu elders to have personal friends among the Akamba, and *vice versa;* and so most Akamba who wanted to go trading into Kikuyu territory could find a mutual friend to make arrangements for them.

When a Kamba trading party wished to enter Kikuyu, they first sent one man to the Kikuyu family with which he was friendly, asking them to supply a party of eight or ten warriors to meet the trading party on the borders on a given day and act as escort to them. The members of this escort were always promised special presents in payment for their service, and they took good care to get these presents in advance, as otherwise the Akamba would have been tempted to use them up in the course of trade.

The Akamba arrived carrying brass and copper wire, cowrie shells, beads, and trade cloth, and ornaments and chain work made by the Kamba jewellers. Occasionally they drove in a herd of cattle as well. The Kikuyu escort would conduct the party safely to the village whence (p.498) the escort had been sent, and they would also help by sending messages to their friends who had ivory or rhino horn, bidding come barter with Akamba.

A big bull-elephant tusk was valued at 100 goats and sheep, or their equivalent in trade goods and cattle. A cow-elephant tusk and one of an immature animal fetched less than half this amount, while an average rhino horn was valued at one bullock or its equivalent in trade goods.

When the Kamba trading party had bartered all their goods for ivory, they would give a second present to the warriors who had escorted them into Kikuyu country, as a fee for escorting them out again.

Although the Kikuyu must have known that once a Kamba trading party was in their country it was at their mercy, and they could have all the trade goods for nothing, my informants knew of no case of a party ever having been attacked. It seems pretty certain that the Kikuyu always respected such trading parties and treated them fairly, because they knew that if a Kamba trade expedition failed to return home safely, other expeditions would be unwilling to come. This would have been serious for the Kikuyu, for although they were always able to obtain some beads, wire, etc. from the Maasai, the greater part of their requirements came from the Akamba. Moreover, the Kikuyu wanted these things very much, and even as things were, they never got enough to satisfy their demands, until the coming of Europeans brought the trade to their frontiers.

Trade with Arabs and Swahilis

During the last quarter of the nineteenth century the Arab and the Swahili trade caravans—which had already been trading for a long time with the Maasai and the Akamba—began to come to the borders of Kikuyu country in order to trade with this tribe. These traders, whom the Kikuyu spoke of as *thũkũmũ*, were in the habit of coming to a place midway between Dagoretti and the site of the present Ngong Government Station, on the Maasai side of the Mbagathi River. Their custom was to fire off guns into the air on their arrival, and then to build a camp and await the arrival of

the Kikuyu. As soon as they heard the report of the guns, those Kikuyu who lived in the Dagoretti area would send messages to the rest of South Kikuyu country to say that the *thũkũmũ* had come.

These traders not only wanted ivory and rhino horn, but were always anxious also to buy large quantities of grain for food for their caravans (p.499) on their journey to the coast, and as the Kikuyu were keen to possess the trade goods brought by the Arabs and Swahili traders, trade was always brisk. The *thũkũmũ* traders were not, however, regarded as a people who should be treated with respect, as in the case of the Kamba or Maasai trading parties, and they owed such safety as they enjoyed solely to the fact that they were well armed with guns and were well organised to resist attacks.

The two best known leaders of the Arab trade caravans were called by Kikuyu Rũara and Nyanja. These two Arabs accompanied Teleki's party in 1883, and it was their presence that did much to help Teleki enter Kikuyu country. Both of them were able to make friends with some of the Kikuyu leaders, who agreed that if any Kikuyu tried to steal goods from the traders, the traders might shoot them without fear of retribution by the Kikuyu as a whole. The Kikuyu, however, warned both these leaders that if they acted unfairly the Kikuyu would try to exterminate their party. Caravans other than those in charge of these two leaders were not so welcome, owing to their unscrupulous dealings, and several of them had serious trouble.

After a time some of the Arab and Swahili caravans decided to try to penetrate Kikuyu country itself, and they did, in fact, do so on several occasions, but as they were forced to pay "tribute" at each river before they entered the next ridge, and as in the end they had several pitched battles with the Kikuyu, the later traders went back to the custom of camping beyond the Mbagathi River, and this custom continued until the coming of the first Europeans.

Trade with North Kikuyu

The Kikuyu of the area with which we are dealing (south of the Chania river) were dependent upon trade from North Kikuyu for a percentage of their everyday requirements, and more especially for such things as saddle-querns (*mahiga ma gũkia*), good quality red ochre (*thĩrĩga*), and blue powder (*thegeme*). The Northern Kikuyu also used to bring down large quantities of tobacco, pig-iron, and iron made into knives and swords, for the iron ore of the South was inferior to that of the North. The tobacco grown on the granite soils of Fort Hall was of such better quality than that grown in South Kikuyu, that it was always in demand. The Northern Kikuyu, for their part, were anxious to obtain soda, as well as goat and sheep skins, of which there was always a shortage in North Kikuyu. Soda was not to be found in South Kikuyu any more (p.500) than in the North, but it occurred in the Maasai country, whence it was fetched regularly—as we shall see presently—by a special group of Kikuyu families who acted as middlemen for this trade.

Many of the skins, too, that the South Kikuyu traded with the North Kikuyu were skins which they had obtained from trade with the Maasai, and not the skins of their own animals, which were used almost exclusively for home requirements. In other words, the trade between North and South Kikuyu was mainly based upon what the latter could get from Maasai country.

This trade with North Kikuyu was always initiated by parties coming from North Kikuyu, and no trade parties went there from the South to barter for ochre or saddle-querns. At the most, a village in South Kikuyu would send one or two warriors into North Kikuyu with messages that if a trade party would come down to their village they would be warmly received, and these warriors would then act as guides to such a trade party. This method of obtaining trade was more particularly

employed by the Kikuyu living in the remoter parts of South Kikuyu, because they knew that otherwise, any trade parties that crossed the Chania would tend to part with all their trade goods in the Ting'ang'a, Gĩthũngũri, and Kambũi areas, and therefore never penetrate to the Kabete, Ũthĩrũ, Mũgũga, and other more remote districts.

A trade party thus conducted by one or two warriors was in honour, bound to go right through to the village of their guides, and in return for this they would be particularly well treated to make up for the extra distance they had to travel.

Another way in which trade was organised was connected with the fact that all the Kikuyu families in the southern district were descended from men who had originally migrated from north of the Chania and in many cases had left part of the family behind them. Related families of the two districts from time to time invited each other to pay visits and such visits. Their visits, while not in the nature of trade expeditions, were always combined with trade exchange in a small way. If a South Kikuyu man went to visit his relatives north of the Chania, he would usually take a load of Magadi soda or of skins, and would return with pig-iron, ochre, etc. and *vice versa*.

The only form of trade with North Kikuyu which was organised from the South Kikuyu end was the trade in vulture feathers. The Kikuyu in the area round Gaicanjirũ beyond Thika were renowned for their skill in catching vultures, and they always had vast quantities of feathers for disposal in exchange for soda or skins. Parties of Kikuyu warriors from the South, therefore, would commonly go to that district, carrying soda and skins, in order to barter them for vulture feathers with which to make their dance head-dresses and special feather cloaks.

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The trading parties from North Kikuyu were nearly always comprised of men and women together. They were never attacked and killed, but occasionally and irresponsible band of South Kikuyu warriors would attack a party that was bringing red ochre, and loot it. For this reason the ochre traders, whenever possible, entered South Kikuyu by night, and travelled by night until they came to a village where they were known.

Internal Trade

The big, organised markets for internal trade that are such a feature of present day Kikuyu life did not come into existence in South Kikuyu until the time of the great famine of 1898-1899, and they hardly belong to the period we are dealing with in this study.

As far as agricultural produce was concerned, every family grew what it needed, and if some accident—such as the destruction of a crop by wild animals or birds—resulted in any family being short of its requirements, they would obtain what they wanted by private barter with other families. As far as articles made by specialists were concerned, the Kikuyu custom was either for a man or woman who required such objects to place an order with a specialist, while supplying the necessary raw materials, or else to buy the required objects from the specialist with garden produce or anything else that he demanded.

The nearest approach to shops were probably the smithies, where smiths or wire workers made metal articles of all kinds and sold them to customers as required.

Under the heading of internal trade, mention should be made of the trade in Magadi soda, for although this commodity was obtained in Maasai country it was not "external trade", for it was not obtained from the Maasai by trade, but was mined by Kikuyu who went into Maasai country for this special purpose.

The soda trade was in the hands of people who made this their profession, and it was one that was definitely dangerous. Soda occurred in reasonable quantities only at Magadi Soda Lake in the heart of Maasai country, and the Maasai were jealous of it and objected to anyone else going to mine it. In spite of this, the Kikuyu who made this their profession, regularly made journeys to Magadi to mine the soda and bring it back. This soda mining profession was so distinct and separate that these people could not participate in any sacrifice with any person other than a member of their profession, and no Kikuyu who was not a soda (p.502) miner himself would sleep in their homesteads under any pretext. Moreover, to call people who were not members of the profession "*amagata*" (soda people) was to insult them gravely.

The reason for this separation of the soda miners is explained by the circumstances of their life. The soda miner would commonly go on a mining expedition accompanied by his wife, if she was not too old, and as they were often away three months or more he would normally have sexual intercourse with her in the bush as they travelled, a thing which was utterly taboo to all ordinary Kikuyu. Moreover, the soda miners, although not hunters, would often of necessity eat the flesh of wild game, and this too, made them separate and distinct people with whom it would be dangerous to be friendly and on intimate terms.

Before a party of soda miners set out they always consulted a medicine-man as to whether the time and circumstances were propitious, and obtained from him a charm to protect them on their enterprise. Any man who went on a soda expedition for the first time had to pay a fee to the people he was accompanying, and each party was always led by a senior member of the profession.

These soda miners had their own route to Lake Magadi, with their own secret sleeping places *en route*, and their own water-holes which their fore-runners had located and had shown to their successors. They journeyed mainly by night, and hid and slept by day. Guides were therefore essential, and they had to know the route very well.

At their various sleeping places *en route* they were accustomed to make caches of food, such as yams, maize cobs, and other things that would not perish quickly, the food for these caches being carried with them on their inward journey. The normal procedure was for each miner to dig three loads of soda at Lake Magadi and then on three consecutive nights carry these back to the first hiding place, and so on, from one hiding place to another, so that in effect he accomplished three journeys in one, and it was for this reason that the miners were often away for two and three months at a time, although the distance to Lake Magadi by the route they took was only about 80 miles, or ten nights' march.

The reason for working in this way lay in the fact that the Maasai guarded the soda at Magadi so carefully. Having once succeeded in getting to the soda mines, and mining a large quantity of soda, it was essential to get as much of it away as possible, for fear that it might be a long time before the mining parties could again escape the vigilance of the Maasai and actually carry out their mining.

Sometimes a party would get within sight of Lake Magadi and then have to spend a week or more waiting for an opportunity to mine it in (p.503) safety. From to time, too, a soda mining expedition failed to return, having been wiped out by the Maasai in spite of all precautions.

Once they arrived back in Kikuyu country with their soda, the agricultural people would flock to their camp in the forest to barter for it, for the miners did not as a rule take the soda back to their

homes, but to a special forest encampment where they lived until they had bartered all their stock, after which they returned to their homesteads to rest until another expedition set out.

To avoid overloading themselves, the soda miners never carried spears, swords, or shields for self-defence, but only light bows and arrows.

The actual mining was done with a wooden crowbar called *mũnyago* (like the agricultural digging stick), and these they hid near Lake Magadi and collected from their hiding places when they needed them.

Currency and Barter Values

The Kikuyu had no currency in the strict sense of that word, and for the most part, barter was carried out on the basis of exchanging goods of more or less equal value. The nearest approach to a distinct currency among the Kikuyu was their conception of the goat or sheep under the general term of *mbũri*. This conception can be best explained by giving a number of examples.

In assessing the amount of a fine, the value of a piece of land, or the price of any object of value, the assessment was always made in terms of *mbũri*, even though the payment might be made in other things to the value of the number of *mbũri* assessed. Thus a piece of land might have been valued at 30 *mbũri*, but paid for in cows, each cow or heifer being reckoned as 10 *mbũri*, although the standard rate for the purchase of a cow was not 10 *mbũri*, but 12. Or again, a fine for murder which was reckoned at 100 *mbũri* might actually be paid for in cows or heifers.

Looked at from another point of view, the near approach of the conception of a *mbũri* to a unit of currency is shown by the fact that one would not go to another and ask to buy *mbũri*, any more than in our society I would go to someone and ask to buy bank notes. If a man wished to acquire *mbũri*, he could do so only by making, manufacturing, growing, or in some other way producing something which someone else would want to buy. He could then sell his products and so accumulate *mbũri*, just as in our society a businessman sells his product and so increases his wealth.

This conception of *mbũri* (meaning both goats and sheep) as a special (p.504) form of currency which could not be bought, but used only for purchasing things, applied to goats and sheep in general, as covered by the term *mbũri*, but any man could approach another and ask to buy a *ndũrũme* (ram), a *thenge* (he-goat), a *mwatĩ* (ewe), or a *harika* (she-goat), and by using these specific words denoting a ram or a ewe, etc. it was made clear that the would-be purchaser was not asking to buy *mbũri* in the currency sense, but that he desired to purchase a special animal or animals for a definite purpose. Moreover, the purchaser would have to pay in form of *mbũri*.

Thus a he-goat such as was used in certain ceremonies and sacrifices, was valued at either two *mbũri* (in lamb or kid), or else at three *mbũri* that were not in lamb or kid. Similarly, a ram was valued at two *mbũri* or three young immature *mbũri*, and a virgin ewe (such as was essential for certain ceremonies) was valued at one *mbũri*, and so on. A man's wealth was reckoned in terms of *mbũri*, even if in fact he had more cattle than goats and sheep, for a *mbũri* was the "unit of value".

For the purpose of buying small articles that were not of the value of a whole *mbũri*, the most important units of value were a *rũũa* (the skin of a goat or sheep), a *gĩkama* (a piece of pig-iron), and a *gĩtuĩka* (a piece of iron from a broken spear or sword or other article). These three things might, like *mbũri*, be reckoned as having been nearly equivalent to currency, but not in exactly the same way as *mbũri*, which were also desirable in themselves. None of the other three objects was ever utilised in the form in which they were acquired through barter, though all of them could be

made into objects which could be utilised. Also, although a man or woman would always accept payment in any of these three things, his acceptance did not mean that he or she was in need of, or had any use for them as objects. They were accepted simply as tokens of value, which could in turn be used to buy food or other produce as required. The use of all these four things for valuing or buying other things was, of course, quite distinct from the common practice of ordinary barter by which a person with more corn than he or she required exchanged it for soda, red ochre, or some other desired article. Both the system of barter by exchange, and the system of purchase, did in fact exist side by side in the organisation of internal trade among the Kikuyu.

The exchange value or the purchase price of the various Kikuyu objects of material culture or of agricultural produce naturally varied and fluctuated in accordance with the ordinary laws of supply and demand, and no complete list can be attempted, both for this reason and because it would be almost impossible to make a complete list. A few more or less standard examples of value may, however, be given: (p.505) two shields were values at one *mbũri*, and if a man wanted only one he did not pay in *mbũri*, but gave one sword. A sword was valued at one small immature *mbũri*. A spear was valued at a *kĩragu kĩa mbũri* (large male sheep or goat, possibly pregnant). A saddle-quern was valued at one goat or sheep skin. A woman's or man's full length cloak was valued at one *mbũri* plus one goat or sheep skin, the latter being paid for the work of sewing the garment, and called *rũũa rũa nga*, a skin for the sinews (with which the cloak was sewn). Further examples of the values of articles will be found in the text of various chapters.

Travel

Certain aspects of travel have already been dealt with in connection with trade, and we have seen that many Kikuyu were in the habit of going outside their territory in connection with trade or with warfare. It now remains for us to consider other aspects of travel, and more particularly travel within Kikuyu country.

There were a number of reasons why men and women had to leave their own homes from time to time, and go away on journeys, and of these the most important, the most frequent, were journeys to visit friends or relations who lived in other parts of Kikuyu country, journeys in search of an estate that was not overcrowded and where the owner or owning family would welcome tenants, journeys to consult a really important medicine-man living a great distance away, and journeys to demand payment of a debt. Of these four reasons for journeying, the first was the most important, for, as we have already seen in the earlier chapters of this book, the Kikuyu of South Kikuyu had moved into the area south of the Chania River from the north. It was not often, however, that a whole family moved, so nearly every Kikuyu family had relatives, and all of them friends, in other distant areas.

Whenever a Kikuyu man found it necessary to go on a journey that would involve absence from his own home for several days, he would, if the proposed journey was being undertaken in connection with business of one sort or another, go first of all to the local medicine-man to consult him as to whether the omens were propitious. If, however, the journey was purely for the purpose of a friendly visit (*gũthiĩ ũgeni*), then no such precaution was necessary, even if the visit involved absence for a month or more. The idea underlying the difference between a friendly visit and a business visit was that if you were going on business you might find yourself in conflict with someone over something, and (p.506) be made the subject of witchcraft (*ũrogi*), whereas if you were going on a friendly visit there was little fear of this.

A medicine-man was supposed to be able to foretell the future, and if he was consulted, he would either advise against the journey being undertaken at all, if he foresaw trouble, or else he would provide a material powder or a charm to ward off such evil.

No Kikuyu ever undertook a journey involving absence from home for several days by himself, but always asked a friend to go with him as a travelling companion, in order that they might *rutana ihoru* (prevent each other from feeling lonely), for the Kikuyu hated solitude more than anything else.

Having decided upon a journey and fixed the day on which he was going to start, a man would tell his wife to prepare some gruel and fill a small *gĩtete* (bottle gourd) with it for him. Apart from this, and possibly a piece of sugar-cane, no traveller in Kikuyu ever troubled to carry food with him, as he knew that the Kikuyu laws of hospitality would make it possible for him to get food and a night's rest wherever he happened to be when evening approached. Moreover, his host would always provide a refill of his gruel gourd before he started on the next day's stage of his journey.

When a man set out on a journey it was usual to start at an early hour in the morning, and custom and prudence demanded that he she should keep his eyes open for any sign of an omen which would indicate whether his journey would be propitious or not. Among a large number of recognised omens, good and bad, the following were the most important.

If any snake (other than a *mũrarũ*—green grass snake) was seen to cross the pathway along which the man was travelling, that was a bad omen, and the journey had to be abandoned forthwith, although it might be undertaken later. If a duiker was seen close to the path, or if it crossed the path of a traveller, then he had to turn back and wait at least until the next day. If a hyena was seen by daylight when a man was starting on a journey, he need not abandon the journey, but he had to turn back, make a detour, and come back to the path beyond the place where he first saw the hyena. If a jackal was seen or heard by day when the man was on a journey, he had to turn back and go and sit on his stool in his own hut. This done, he could start out again that same day.

Apart from these specific omens, nearly every Kikuyu also had his own "*nyoni njũru*" and his "*nyoni njega*," that is, his bad and good omens, which he knew by experience to be good or bad, for him personally. These omens were usually connected with people of various ages and sex. Thus, one man would consider that his good omen was a little girl, another a grown man, third a warrior, and so on, while at the same (p.507) time he knew in his own mind that an old woman or a boy, for example, was his bad omen. If, when setting out on a journey, a man had the misfortune to see his own particular bad omen before seeing any other person, then he would abandon his journey until the next day.

As a matter of fact, most Kikuyu were so impressed with the need for seeing a good omen first thing in the morning, that even if they were not going on a journey, they would take the precaution when they woke up each morning of summoning an appropriate member of the household to the door of the hut so that they might be seen before anyone else, and so bring good fortune to the day's events.

Of the many good omens that the Kikuyu might meet, the following were the most important. It was very lucky to have a *mũrarũ* (green grass snake) cross the path when you started on a journey, and the journey was bound to be successful. It was lucky to meet or to see a leopard, for that indicated that you would come back a richer man than when you left, for, "*Ngarĩ nĩ itaha*" (a proverbial saying, literally, "A leopard spoil, (or loot)") and so was the symbol of a successful raid.

If a *ngware* (a species of francolin) ran along the path in front of a traveller in the morning, that was an omen of success. If a mole rat crossed the path and a man succeeded in killing it and tying a little bit of its fur to his cloak, that was a good omen, and all was well. If a chameleon was on the pathway, and the traveller could turn it with the end of his staff and make it walk back in the opposite direction from which it was going, that was an omen of good fortune and success. If a traveller saw an aardvark on the pathway when he was on a journey, that was a sign of good luck (*mũnyaka*).

If a man was on a journey involving several nights on the road, he looked for the omens described above each morning, and if he saw one of the bad omens he did not have to abandon the journey altogether, but he had to return to the point where he had spent the night, and from whence he had started that day's journey, and wait there until the following morning.

It sometimes happened that both a man and his wife would go visiting at the same time, but to different destinations, and if they did so, they had to be very careful not on any account to return home on the same day, as that would be very unlucky. If, therefore, either a man or a woman went away on a visit, he or she, on returning home, would make enquiries of the neighbours to make sure that the other partner had not been away for one night or more and just arrived back also. Even in spite of this precaution, it sometimes happened that a man and a woman would actually arrive back in the homestead, and discover that the other partner had also arrived back that day from a journey. If this did (p.508) happen, the man had to call in one or two council elders immediately and sacrifice a young ram or a ewe. Then both husband and wife had a rawhide strip put on their wrists, and whoever was the last of the two to arrive had to go away again and sleep the night elsewhere. Because of this, if a man came back to his home district and heard that his wife had also been away and had just arrived back (or *vice versa*), he would go away again without announcing his return, and then come home next day.

It sometimes happened that a man and his wife, or one of his wives, would go on a journey together, and in that case, when they return back home they could come back together on the same day, "for they had been on one journey and not on two different journeys".

There were certain taboos which a husband and wife travelling together had to observe. Except in the case of a man going on a journey with a young bride who had not yet had a baby and who had no hut, a man who went on a journey accompanied by his wife had to take care not to have any sexual contact with her whatsoever (even if the journey or visit meant being away from home for a month or more). So strict was this rule (except within the guild of soda miners), that when on a joint visit to some other homestead, a man and his wife could not sleep in the same hut. The man had to be given a bed in one hut and his wife one in another.

A man who was on a journey with a bride (*mũhiki*), however, was always given a bed to share with her in the men's hut of the homestead, and he could have intercourse with her.

When a woman decided to go visiting (*gũthiĩ ũgeni*) to some place far enough away to involve an absence of a night or more, she did not take with her as companion for the journey another married woman, but would be usually accompanied by a daughter, or by a young son, if she had one old enough to walk the distance. If, on the other hand, she was a young woman with no children old enough to accompany her, she would call in a woman or a girl from the village in which she lived and ask her to go with her.

In the ordinary course of events, only two things would take a married woman away from her own home for the night: either a visit to a married daughter or to her own mother. Since Kikuyu girls usually married men living in the same district, the necessity for them to spend a night away was rare. The necessity arose chiefly because it was not uncommon for the family to move to a new district, when, of course, they were not accompanied by relations-in-law, so that a woman and her mother were separated by a greater distance than was normal.

The commonest cause of a man and wife going on a journey together (p.509) was the birth of a grandchild at some distance, for custom demanded that soon after such an event the grandparents, if alive, should visit the father and mother and take a present.

If during the absence of any member of a family on a journey of any kind, including trade expeditions, a member of that family died (even a baby), then, when the travelling member of the family returned home again, it was essential that a ram should be slaughtered for the ceremony of *kũrĩanĩra* (a communal meal), and before the meat was eaten the ram's stomach contents were squeezed to extract the stomach juices, and this juice was mixed with boiled sweet potatoes, gruel, and other boiled food, which had then to be eaten by every member of the family, including the returned person. If any member of the family was unavoidably absent from the feast, some of the ram's stomach juices had to be squeezed over a small piece of sugar-cane, and this bit of sugar-cane despatched on the next day by special messenger to the absent member of the family, even if he lived several days' journey away. If, however, the absent person was a man or woman away on a visit, a trade journey, or a war raid, the bit of sugar-cane was kept until he or she returned home.

If a man or woman dwelt for a time in Maasai country, either voluntarily, as was sometimes the case, or through being taken prisoner, then, either by a ceremony held in Maasai country, or simply by the fact of living there for some time, he or she had become a Maasai (*Mũũkabi*), while being at the same time a Kikuyu by birth. If, and when, such a person returned to Kikuyu country again, he or she was thereafter regarded as a member of the Ũkabi guild of the Kikuyu people, and would in the future have to observe and adhere to the special rules and customs of that guild in all matters (such as initiation) where the customs of the two guilds differed. A man in such circumstances who later wished to marry a woman who was a member of the Kikuyu guild, would first have to have the woman "changed" into a Maasai guild member.

When a man or woman returned from a long journey in a foreign country, as when he or she returned from a trade expedition or a visit to friends in Maasai or Kamba country, it was normal to give such a person a purgative consisting of a drink made from the roots of the plants called *mũtegenye* and *gĩkunguĩ*. The object of this purgative was to remove any ill effects of having drunk bad water or eaten unsuitable foods while away. The roots of the former plant were also regarded as a cure for malaria, which was sometimes contracted by people who went out of Kikuyu country (see Chapter 21).

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Birth

Among the Kikuyu, children were greatly desired, and both male and female children were equally appreciated. Every Kikuyu elder, in the course of the prayers which he said regularly to the ancestral spirits, as well as in those to God, prayed that his family might be fruitful and that children might be given to him. Every woman (although she said no prayers) hoped that she would have many children so that she would be regarded as "blessed among women". A barren woman, or one whose children were still-born or died very young, was an object of scorn among her more favoured sisters, and she would do everything in her power to avert such a disaster.

In spite of the fact that children were so desired by the Kikuyu, their laws and customs were such that no woman was allowed to give birth to as many children as she was capable of producing naturally, since much greater importance was attached to having healthy children, than to having many children. In view of this, Kikuyu law and custom ordained that no married woman might conceive another child until the previous one had been weaned, and since weaning did not normally take place until a child was about two years old, Kikuyu babies were spaced out to about one in every third year. If any child died before the age of two, however, the mother was permitted to conceive again as soon as she could.

The reasons given for this deliberate spacing of children were that a woman who was suckling a child was not considered strong enough to perform this duty, as well as her household duties, and at the same time to carry a new child in her womb. It was, in fact, believed that women who

conceived while they were still suckling another child would harm both of them, and that neither the child in the womb nor the one suckling would grow strong and vigorous.

The details of the many ceremonies relating to the various aspects of childbirth are outlined in this chapter.

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Pre-natal Treatment

As soon as a Kikuyu woman realised that she had missed two consecutive menstrual periods she considered it certain that she had conceived, and she informed her husband of her pregnancy. For one or sometimes two more months he continued to have sexual intercourse with her, since by so doing he was regarded as contributing to the growth of the child within the womb. This process was referred to as nurturing the child (*kũrera mwana*), and if a husband neglected to do this, he would be considered guilty if the child was born a weakling.

When the woman was about four months pregnant all full sexual intercourse between the husband and wife was expected to cease, but a husband might, and usually did, continue to visit his wife's hut and to sleep with her at intervals. He might fondle her breasts and also have a restricted form of intercourse affecting only the external genitalia. Any man who attempted to have full, unrestricted intercourse with his wife after about four months of pregnancy was regarded as endangering the safety of the child in the womb. His wife would, in such circumstances, go to her mother-in-law and ask her to speak to her son and warn him against such practices. If he still persisted, she had the right to go and sleep in her mother-in-law's home as a protection against her husband's advances. A wife who encouraged her husband to come and sleep with her night after night in the middle and later stages of her pregnancy would be reprimanded by the older women and warned that she was endangering her child.

When a woman felt that her time was nearly come, she sent for a skilled midwife to come and examine her. If the midwife found that the baby was not lying in the womb in a position that was favourable for birth, she proceeded to massage (*moya*) the woman's abdomen, and would try by such external pressure and massage, to turn the child to the correct position. When massaging in this way, the midwife removed all the rings from her fingers and used a quantity of castor oil so that she would not chafe the patient's skin. The Kikuyu knew well that any but a "head presentation" involved difficulties, and, in addition to this, they regarded children born in any other way as unlucky.

Midwives

Among the Kikuyu, the only women who were allowed to practise (p.513) midwifery (*gũciarithania*) were those who were themselves past the age of childbearing, and who had abandoned all sexual contact with men. Many women, even when past the climacteric, continued to sleep with and have intercourse with their husbands both for pleasure and also in connection with ceremonies involving ceremonial sexual intercourse. Such women could not practise as midwives, and therefore most midwives were widows who were past childbearing. The need for cleanliness on the part of midwives was appreciated, and although the hygienic precautions left much to be desired from the medical point of view, it is noteworthy that every Kikuyu midwife, when attending a case, was expected to remove all rings and bracelets, to pare her finger nails, and to wash her hands thoroughly in hot water. She then greased her hands with fresh castor oil as a lubricant.

Before any woman was regarded as qualified to undertake midwifery she was expected to attend a great many births in the capacity of assistant to the midwife, and thus to gain the necessary knowledge and skill.

Normal Births

Ordinarily, a woman who knew that her time for giving birth was near did not go far from her own home, but remained in the homestead doing light work such as cooking, sweeping, and sewing leather garments. Then, as soon as her labour pains (*kũrũmwo*) started, she sent for her own mother, if she was still alive and lived reasonably near, and for some of the women of her husband's homestead, to be with her during her labour. They were expected to help the midwife in the delivery and everything connected with it. The midwife summoned was one who usually performed this work in the husband's homestead, and not a midwife from the wife's homestead.

When the labour pains started, the woman was helped into her own hut, and all the children (other than infants) and unmarried girls who normally slept in that hut were sent out. Sometimes a woman's eldest unmarried daughter, if she had been initiated, was allowed to remain in the hut during the birth, but in such a case she was not allowed to help nor even to watch the proceedings, but had to remain in the girl's bedroom. The goats and sheep that normally spent the night in that hut were not allowed in on that night or on the next few nights, but were sent either to the husband's hut or to the hut of another of his wives.

The women who had been called in to assist the midwife undertook various tasks connected with the birth, including lighting a large fire (p.514) of dry wood in the hearth in the centre of the hut, which they kept burning continually, so as to provide adequate illumination.

When the labour pains increased to a point where the midwife considered that delivery was about to take place, the attendant women helped the woman in labour to remove all her clothing. She was then assisted into the *kwerũ*, the part of the hut where the goats and sheep normally slept, where a pole had been tied between two of the roof supports. The woman held on to this bar with both hands, while the midwife's assistants supported her in the position which the Kikuyu regarded as the best for childbirth, namely, with the legs wide apart and knees slightly flexed so that the body was in a semi-crouching position. One of the assistants stood behind the woman and put her arms round the woman's chest, while pressing the small of the woman's back gently with her knees. In this way the pelvis was kept at the angle which was considered best for the delivery of the child. The midwife directed and supervised all these arrangements. She then took a low stool and sat down in front of and below the woman in labour, with the soles of her feet against the ankles of the patient, using them to keep her legs well apart.

When all was ready the woman in labour was encouraged to start rhythmic muscular movements to expel the child from the womb. She used the bar that she was holding on to help her in this. This process was called *kũhihĩra*. During this time the midwife went on sitting in front and below the woman, watching for any sign that her professional help was needed to manipulate or otherwise assist in the birth. In the case of a woman who had already had several straight-forward deliveries, the birth would take place very quickly. In fact, sometimes the birth was so rapid that the child was born before the midwife had had time to realise that she was dealing with a case of "leg presentation", which she would have wanted to try to turn, so as to avoid the child being born unlucky. More often, however, a midwife in her position below and in front, was able to see if a leg or an arm of the baby protruded first, in which case she carefully and gently pushed it back and

inserted her whole hand, well greased with castor oil, into the patient's vagina, and tried thus to turn the child so as to get a "head presentation".

When the baby was about to be born, the midwife placed the mother's skin cloak over her own knees between her legs, so that the baby might be slipped gently from the vagina into this soft lap. The skin garment with the baby in it was kept in this position until the afterbirth (*njogu*) (p.515) came away into it. The mother was then gently helped to her own private **stool** on which *muondwe* or *mũthakwa* leaves had been spread. Still quite naked, she sat down. Her skin cloak containing the baby, who was still attached to the afterbirth by the umbilical cord (*rũrĩra*), was then placed in her lap in order that she might hold it there while the cord was cut. This ceremony was performed by the midwife as follows.

First she took a splinter (*karacũ*) of green *mũthakwa* or green *mũkenia* wood which had been prepared previously. With this she pretended to cut the cord at a point near its junction with the afterbirth. This "symbolic cutting" (*kũgeria*) was repeated twice, after which the midwife produced a metal razor such as was normally used for shaving the head, and with this she actually cut the cord, after first tying it on the side nearest to the baby with a bit of *mũkeũ* bark. As soon as the cord had been severed, and the baby separated from the afterbirth, the midwife, assisted by one other woman, took up the afterbirth on the *mũthakwa* leaves and carried it out of the hut, on out of the homestead, and into the bush. There it had to be placed at the foot of a *mũkenia*, a *mũthakwa*, or a *mũkeũ* bush. Moreover, the afterbirth had to be placed in such a way that its junction with the cord was facing upwards. It was not buried, nor was it covered up in any way, except that the leaves it was carried in were placed over it. It was left to be eaten by kites or by scavenging animals such as jackals.

The baby was then washed all over with cold water. Warm water was used for washing babies on subsequent occasions, because it was believed that cold water was best for this first washing, because it would make the baby cry, and so "come to life".

When the birth was safely over, the attendant women gave the midwife water to wash herself. She then went home, but had to be careful not to wash herself in any stream or river until after the days of the mother's seclusion and the subsequent purification ceremonies were over.

The First Naming Ceremony

When the afterbirth had been disposed of and the baby and mother [a]d been washed, the first naming ceremony took place. The father, or in his absence, some male relative of his who stood in the same classificory relationship to the mother, was summoned to the hut. He entered the doorway and sat down in the porch (*rũri*). He then asked (p.516) in a loud voice, "Whom have you seen ?" (*Mwona ũũ?*). To this question the women in the hut made an answer depending upon whether the child was a first-born or second-born child, etc. For example, if the child was a first-born son they would answer, "*Twona arũme na nĩ thoguo*" (We have seen men and it is your father, or in a less literal translation, We have seen a male child who will be named after your father). In the case of a first-born daughter the correct answer was, "*Twona aka na nĩ nyũkwa*" (We have seen women and it is your mother). If the child was a second-born son, the correct answer was, "*Twona arũme na nĩ mũthoniguo*" (We have seen men and it is your father-in- law), while the answer for a second daughter was, "*Twona aka na nĩ mũthoniguo*" (We have seen women and it is your mother-in-law). For a third son the answer was, "*Twona arũme na nĩ mũrũ wa nyũkwa*" (We have seen men and it is your mother's son, that is, your uterine brother), and for a third daughter, "*Twona aka na nĩ mwarĩ wa nyũkwa*" (We have seen women and it is your mother's daughter). A fourth son was

described as, "*Twona arũme na mĩ mũrũ wa nyina*" (We have seen m«n and it is her mother's son, that is, the child's mother's uterine brother), and a fourth daughter as, "*Twona aka na nĩ mwarĩ wa nyina*" (We have seen women and it is her mother's daughter). A fifth son was described as, "*Twona arũme na* nĩ *mũrũ wa thoguo*" (We have seen men and it is your father's son, that is, your half-brother), while a fifth daughter was, "*Twona aka na nĩ mwarĩ wa thoguo*" (We have seen women, and it is your father's daughter).

This formula for describing the new-born child as one of its relations was due to the fact that each child always received as its "womb name" (*rĩĩtwa rĩa nda*), the name of a particular relative, which was fixed by age-long custom. As a result, before any child was born everybody knew that if it was a boy it would have one particular name, and if a girl, another fixed family name. Moreover, it must be noted that all children born of a normal marriage (see Chapter 19) belonged to the clan of the father only, though half of every family took their "womb name" from the mother's side.

If a first-born son or daughter died before a second son or second daughter was born, then the second son or daughter was treated as though it were the first-born, and was named accordingly. If, on the other hand, a first-born son or daughter died in later childhood, after other children had been born, the naming of subsequent children continued according to the plan indicated above, and no child was later given the name of the one that had died.

When the father or his representative had asked the question, as (p.517) above and had received the appropriate answer, he then said, "*Mwamũtua ũũ?* (What have you called him (or her)? Then the women present answered using the womb name of the relative they had mentioned. After the two questions had been asked and answered, all the women present (except the mother) ululated. This they did four times if the child was a girl and five times if a boy. This ululating four or five times informed everyone else in the homestead of the sex of the child that had been born, and knowing its sex, they all automatically knew what its "womb name" was.

Treatment of Mother and Child

The cord was left attached to the baby's body, and at the point of its junction with the navel, the mother smeared a mixture of castor oil, soot from the roof of the hut, and soda. She repeated this anointing every day until the cord had dried up sufficiently to fall off. It was then carefully hidden at the head end of the mother's bed among the leaves that formed the mattress.

After the baby had been washed and named, the mother was given a bunch of leaves with which to wipe the blood from her cloak that had been used for the baby and the afterbirth to slip into. She did not, however, wash or otherwise clean the cloak at this stage, but left it to be done at the time of the purification ceremony.

When the father (or his representative if the father happened to be dead or away) had taken part in the naming ceremony and had thus ascertained the sex of his latest offspring, he had to go off to collect the following offerings for his wife: a bunch of green bananas of either the *mũtahato* or the *mũthĩrĩri* variety, a quantity of yams, of which four had to be offered to the mother if the child was a girl and five if it was a boy, and sugar-cane, and again he had to bring either four or five canes according to the sex of the child.

Although the woman's husband (or his representative) had to go and get these offerings himself from the fields, he did not necessarily bring them himself, but might hand them over to one of his wives or female relatives to carry for him. These bananas, yams, and sugarcane were intended to provide food for the mother while she was unable go and get it from her garden for herself. This

offering was a symbolic however, for very often it was actually eaten by others, while the mother was given gruel and soft foods. The fact that the husband had (p.518) to go and get food of these varieties, which were all essentially "man's crops", symbolized his acceptance of his responsibility to provide her with food while she was incapacitated.

My informants in 1939 all stated that the conical bud on the end of a; bunch of bananas that a father had to bring to his wife at this time; was never taken to the hut, but was left in the banana grove. This is contrary to information given to me by three very old men in 1923 but as these old men and all other members of their age-group had died by the time of this study, I could not confirm the evidence origin, ally given to me. It is possible that the custom of taking the bud to the hut was a very old custom that fell into disuse so long ago that my later informants did not regard it as significant. My three very old informants of 1923 said that it was "a custom of the old days", that was then no longer practised. They did not say whether it was still practised when they were young or whether they had merely heard about it from their fathers.

After the child had been born and duly named, and after the father had brought the offerings mentioned above, the mother and child were both kept in strict seclusion in her hut for a fixed number of days, four for a girl and five for a boy. During this time she might only go out to relieve herself, and she was attended by her own mother or her co-wives or other female relatives, who cooked for her, drew water for her, and generally looked after her. During these days of seclusion she might do nothing for herself other than suckle her child.

The Ceremony of Purification after a Normal Birth

When the period of seclusion was over the purification ceremony for the mother, child, and midwife took place. On the morning after the days of seclusion were completed, the midwife who had attended the woman returned to the homestead, and all the women and girls living there prepared gruel from bulrush millet, cooked *njahĩ* beans, and other foods, and got ready for the feast that would follow the purification ceremony. One of the women was detailed to prepare a special "brew" of fresh castor oil. When this was ready the midwife sat down and had her hair shaved off by one of the women in the homestead. She turn proceeded to shave the heads of the mother and baby. When this had been done she washed herself all over with water, while the mother washed herself, her clothing, her stool, and the skin sleeping (p.519) mat on her bed with the husks from which the castor oil had been extracted. Before washing herself, the mother swept out her hut very carefully and gathered up all the rubbish, including the leaves that had been spread on the ground at the time of the birth. She took all this, together with potato peel, banana skins, and other refuse that had been temporarily put in a pile outside her hut during the period of her seclusion, and dumped them on the midden. The residual husks of castor oil beans that she had used to cleanse her body and her clothing were also dumped on the midden. Meanwhile, the midwife was given a gourd of castor oil, and with this she anointed her own clothing and her own body. She also poured some out for the women who were to accompany her home to help her carry her "fee", which had to be in the form of food products.

About midday, when all these preliminary preparations were over, the husband of the mother brought a fat ram and slaughtered it for a sacrifice that was called *igongona rĩa mũciairĩ* (the sacrifice for the one who has given birth). For this sacrifice it was not necessary for every member of the family to be present as it was in the case of most family sacrifices. It was more important that the sacrifice should take place on the correct day, and it would clearly not always be possible

to be certain of having all the family present on that day since there was a maximum of five days' notice.

The ram was slaughtered in the courtyard of the homestead after being killed by suffocation, and while it was being throttled, it was held on its back with its head facing the mother's hut. When slaughtering and cutting up the animal for this sacrifice, the father was assisted by two or three elders invited by him. After the animal was dead it was pierced to draw oil the blood in accordance with the usual practice. The first blood was caught in a small half-gourd (*kaihũri*) that had never been used before, and was taken to the mother by one of the women who had attended her during the birth. The mother then dipped the first finger of her right hand into it and put this finger to die baby's lips. This was called *gũkundithia mwana* (to make the baby take a sip). The reason for this act was that, ceremonially at least, the baby for whom the sacrifice had been made had to be the first person to partake of the slaughtered animal. The new half-gourd in which the blood had been caught became the property of the baby's mother, to be used for the baby. The blood might not be washed out of it, but rather allowed to soak into it and dry. The rest of the blood of the slaughtered animal was used to make the blood sausages which have described in Chapter 8.

The following joints of the animal were then set to roast on a special (p.520) roasting platform in the courtyard: both of the half-saddle joints, each with part of the scapula attached (*makengeto*), the intestines (*mara*), half of the dorsal sac of the rumen (part of the first chamber of the stomach—*ihu rĩa maĩ*), the liver (*ini*), the last cervical and first four dorsal vertebrae (*mũkua-tũhũ*), the first three ribs from one side with part of the sternum attached (*kĩĩga*), the atlas with the throat meat attached (*ngata*), and the kidneys (*higo*). The rest of the meat was sent to the mother's hut to be boiled. The fat was carefully set aside to be rendered down, and the skin set aside to be pegged out on the following day. When it was dry this skin would be made into a carrying skin for the new baby.

When the joints had been duly roasted, the father of the new baby cut from one half-saddle joint (*ikengeto*), five or four pieces of meat according to the sex of the child. These pieces of meat were placed in a half-gourd (not a new one this time, but one already in use in the mother's hut) and carried to the mother by one of the women attendants. The father then called out from the courtyard, "*Nĩageririe nyama?*" (Has she tried the meat), and the women answered, "*Nĩageririe*" (She has tried it). The men who had assembled in the courtyard could then eat from the roasted joints, which, until this moment, they had not even been allowed to taste. While the men were eating the sacrificial meat, the women who had attended the mother (including the midwife), and any other women present, had their feast of roast bananas, yams, and sugar-cane. These had been fetched from the fields in the morning by the women living in the homestead, and they were similar to those which the father had had to collect on the morning following the birth. Once again the rule was five for a boy and four for a girl. The top hand of the banana bunch, known as *mwahũ wa ngo,* had to be given to the midwife as part of her fee, which also included a half-gourd of *njahĩ* beans and a half-gourd of gruel.

If the midwife happened to belong to the same homestead as the mother and baby, she was given, in addition, one of the shoulder joints of the sacrificial ram. If she came from another homestead she could not be given any meat, for in accordance with custom, women could not eat sacrificial meat which had been slaughtered in any homestead but their own. The midwife and the baby's mother each had to bury the hair that had been shaved from their heads under a bush in one of the thickets near the huts.

When the father and the elders had finished eating the sacrificial meat, the latter departed for their own homes, where they had to sleep that night in the men's huts, and might not on any account sleep in any wife's hut or have sexual contact with any woman.

That same evening, when the joints that had been boiled, were ready, (p.521) the father was given one foot while the mother and other women ate the fourth chamber of the stomach, and drank the broth in which the the meat had been boiled. This was also called *kũgeria nyama*. It was necessary to taste some of this meat, "Lest the meat stay all night untasted" (*Nĩ getha nyama itikaraare itarĩ ngerie*), for no boiled meats were allowed to stand untasted overnight.

Next morning the remaining boiled joints were brought into the courtyard on a wicker tray, and placed on the exact spot where the sacrificial fire had been on the previous day. The elders who had assisted in the act of sacrifice came once again, and they and the child's father ate the meat of the ram's head. The women living in the homestead ate the remaining boiled joints except the lungs, the neck, the first three ribs of one side with part of the sternum attached, and the heart. These were set aside, together with the sacrum with the lumbar and caudal vertebrae attached (*rũcuthĩ*), and the ventral sac of the rumen, which is part of the first chamber of the stomach (*mũromo wa ihu*), and together they formed the *nyama cia igongona*, or main sacrificial meat, which had to be eaten in private by the husband and wife.

The fat of the ram was then rendered down and put into a new and clean small earthenware jar, from which it would be taken as required to be mixed with mashed banana and fed to the baby. The skin of the sacrificial animal was carefully pegged out to dry in such a way that the head end was facing the mother's hut, and as soon as it was dry the father had to pluck the hairs from the outer side so as to prepare it for use as a baby carrying skin.

After eating the head of the ram the elders returned home, and that evening the father went to the mother's hut, where they ate the sacrificial meats together, the *rũcuthĩ* and *mũromo wa ihu*, after which the *rũcuthĩ* bones were disposed of at the head end of the woman's bed. The husband still could not sleep with his wife.

Early the next morning she had to go to the fields and collect food. She might not, however, in any circumstances, go to her own gardens, but had to go to those of some other woman who had given her permission to do so. While so doing she carried the baby with her, but it had to be well covered up by her cloak so that no one, not even her own husband, could see it. Having arrived at the friend's garden, she first of all ceremonially pulled up a handful of weeds, in recognition o the fact that any woman going to collect food from the fields always some weeding at the same time. Having done this, she dug up a few sweet potatoes and one yam. This ceremony was called *kũmaathithia mwana* (to look for food for the baby), and having performed it she went back to her own hut. That evening she cooked the food (p.522) carefully and then summoned her husband to come and eat it in her hut. This he did, sitting in the porch. This was one of the few occasions when a husband and wife ate together, or when the husband ate in his wife's hut, the normal rule being for the wife to take the food she had cooked for her husband to the men's hut.

The father again could not sleep in his wife's hut, but having eaten had to go back to his own hut to sleep. Moreover, for a whole month he had to be strictly continent and not sleep with any of his other wives, nor with any other woman or girl. It was thought that if he broke this rule of continence he would irreparably damage his baby's health and in all probability it would die. During that whole month the mother had to be careful not to let the father or any other adult male see the baby. Apart from his, she resumed a more or less normal life, and she cooked for herself and for her

husband, neither of which she had been allowed to do before the ceremony of *kũmaathithia mwana*. However, she could not take her husband's share of the evening meal to him herself, as she was still regarded as unclean in some respects. Instead she had to send it over to his hut by a child or by one of her co-wives.

The rule of continence which was incumbent on the father for a whole month also had to be observed by the elders who had partaken of the sacrificial meat. They could not sleep with their wives again until after the husband had performed the concluding ceremony of purification with his wife, called *igongona rĩa gũtinia mĩruru ya mwana* (the sacrifice for ending the uncleannesses of birth). This ceremony had to take place exactly one month from the day of the shaving ceremony. He now had to have sexual intercourse with her twice that night, and spend the rest of the night with her in her bed. Next morning the wife handed him a half-gourd of water with which he ceremonially washed his face, forehead, chin, hands, wrists, and ankles. Having done so, he went out of his wife's hut and informed the other elders that the ceremony had been duly completed so that they might resume their normal sex lives.

As a result of the sexual prohibitions involved in the performance of the ceremonies connected with this sacrifice, a man sometimes had difficulty in finding elders willing to participate. This was due to the fact that many men who would have helped might be required to have sexual intercourse in connection with some ritual in their homes. No elder would, however, refuse to help simply because he did not feel inclined to accept a month's total continence, since Kikuyu law and custom required elders to participate in ceremonies of this type if they could.

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Once a husband had performed the ceremony described above, he did not normally sleep with the mother of the new baby again for several months, but if he had only one wife, and wished to do so, he might, provided that he took care not to cause another pregnancy. In many cases, however, a man with only one wife was still a member of the warrior class, in which case he could indulge in restricted sexual intercourse (*nguiko*) with unmarried girls, and satisfy his sexual desires in that way. Moreover, a man was entitled to have sexual intercourse with any of the wives of any married warrior in his age-group, if they were willing to do so (as they usually were). Abstinence from sexual contact with his wife while she was suckling her child was not therefore a hardship, and did not necessarily involve continence.

Abnormal Births

If Surgical Aid was Needed

The word abnormal is used here in a very wide sense to cover all births that were not treated by the Kikuyu as normal. It sometimes happened that if the operation of clitoridectomy had been clumsily performed, or if the girl had been careless in tending the wound during the days immediately following the operation, scar tissue formed across the top of the *labia majora* in the area where the operation had been performed. This scar tissue could result in constriction of the genitalia, making the process of childbirth difficult, or even impossible, without surgical aid.

In such circumstances the midwife used a razor to sever the scar tissue between the two *labia*. By this act, however, the midwife was considered to have become ceremonially unclean, and in consequence the woman's husband had to produce a small he-lamb or a small he- goat, which was immediately slaughtered and eaten. The stomach was taken from this slaughtered animal and made into a rawhide bracelet, which was placed round the midwife's left wrist to show that she had been

purified. After this, if the birth was in other ways normal, the procedure was the same as that which has already been described for normal births, except for the final act of ceremonial sexual intercourse. The husband might not, in any circumstances, perform this ceremonial sex act himself, "because his wife had been operated on a second time". Instead he had to ask a man belonging to his own age-group (a man who might legitimately have intercourse with her) to (p.524) come and perform it for him. The man who performed this service received no fee for thus purifying the woman, nor did she object, because she knew that it was necessary both for her own and her baby's welfare.

If the Labour was Protracted

If the midwife attending a woman in childbirth considered that labour was unduly protracted and the birth abnormally difficult, she sent a message to the woman's husband (or his representative if he was away) informing him of the fact. He immediately proceeded to make the sacrifice required by age-long custom. In most cases this sacrifice was of a ram, but in some families a goat was used. Instead of being slaughtered in the normal way by suffocation, this animal had to be killed in the following special manner. It was brought alive to the hut, where the confinement was taking place and was lifted up and put on the roof of the hut, where it was firmly held by the legs. The husband then thrust a knife deep into the animal's chest to kill it. When he withdrew the knife the blood gushed out and trickled all over the roof of the hut and through the thatch to the ground. As this happened the husband prayed aloud to God. The prayer was not in one of the usual set formulae, but an extempore appeal to God. The two prayers which I heard and recorded are as follows:

1. "*Ngai iyũkia, ũndeithie. Ūnduĩkĩrie mũtumia ũyũ wakwa, oke na njĩra ya thama.*" (Accept this, O God, and help me. Enable my wife to let go, that the child may be born).

2. "*Iyũkia Ngai. Nĩndakũhoera mũtumia ũyũ wakwa nĩwe waheire. Iyũkia, na njokeria mũtumia wakwa, nĩndagũthaitha. Mũrehe o na njĩra ya thama, o rĩngĩ.*" (Accept this, O God. I pray to you for this wife of mine. It is you who gave her to me. Accept this and give me back my wife, I beseech you. Let a child be born again). This sacrificc was always made to God and not to the ancestral spirits, who were not regarded as having any power to help in this case.

The slaughtered animal was then taken off the roof and cut up and eaten by the husband and some of the elders of the village in which the homestead was situated, and who had been called in to assist. None of the meat might be boiled; all of it had to be roasted and consumed at once. Parts were given to such women and children of the homestead as were not concerned in the birth.

If, despite this sacrifice, the labour was still protracted and birth delayed, and if the midwife decided that there was a danger that the (p.525) mother would die, she was carefully helped out of the hut and round to the back where the labour continued. This was a precaution against the woman dying inside the hut, which would have been regarded as very unfortunate for her spirit. If the labour continued and the baby was eventually born alive and well, the mother and baby were carried back into the hut, the baby still attached to the afterbirth. Thereafter the proceedings continued as though the birth had been normal. The only further divergence from the customs connected with a normal birth was the performance of a sacrifice of thanksgiving to God for answering the prayer. This did not take place immediately, but was delayed for about a year in order that the parents might see whether the child was really going to be well and strong.

The sacrifice of thanksgiving was conducted as follows. A ram was selected by the father and led round the homestead alive. Then it was brought to the centre of the courtyard, where the father offered prayers to God. First he prayed with his face lifted to the sky. Then he turned to face Mt. Kenya, then Donyo Sabuk, then the Aberdare Range, and finally he faced the Ngong Hills, saying the same prayers in each direction. When the prayers were over, the animal was suffocated and pierced to draw its blood, which was caught in a half-gourd. The father then dipped a bunch of Kikuyu grass (*nyeki ya kĩgombe*) in the blood, and splashed the blood into the air towards Mt. Kenya. As he did so he prayed and offered the blood as thanks. The same gesture was repeated in the direction of each of the other three mountains in the same order as before. Next the fat of the ram was rendered down, and while still hot and liquid a bunch of Kikuyu grass was dipped into it. This too was offered to God in each of the four mountains.

Next morning specially brewed honey beer was similarly offered to God, but the full details of this thanksgiving service are not given here as they will be found in Chapter 25.

The meat from such an animal sacrificed to God was always roasted and eaten by the members of the family participating in the service. Only a part of each of the roasted joints was eaten, however. In the evening the rest was placed in the courtyard, between two piles of the skewers and the wood of the roasting platform. By next morning God would have sent his messengers to take it away.

If the Mother Died in Childbirth before the Naming Ceremony

It sometimes happened that a mother died before the cord had been cut and before the naming ceremony had taken place. In the days (p.526) before the coming of British rule, such a baby, even though alive, was carried out with its dead mother's body into the bush and abandoned (see Chapter 22). This did not necessarily mean that the baby died, for any barren woman of another family or any woman who was not suckling a baby of her own at the time had the right to go and rescue the child, nurse it, and adopt it as her own. In fact, this was very commonly done, but such a rescued baby had to be named Wanjĩra if it was a girl, or Njĩra-inĩ if a boy (Child of the Road). Such an infant became in all respects a full member of the family of the man and woman who had adopted it.

If it was a girl and she grew to maturity, the family that had adopted her had a legal right to the marriage insurance. The family of the natural parents had no responsibility for, nor any legal claim to, the child. After-such a baby was rescued, the new "father" slaughtered a ram to provide fat for the "mother" while nursing, and if she was unable to produce milk from her own breasts, the "father" would provide cow's milk for the baby.

If the Mother Died after the Cord had been Cut and the Baby had been Named

If a woman died from puerperal fever or from loss of blood and exhaustion after the naming ceremony had been performed, giving the baby its own identity, the baby would not be thrown out with its mother's corpse. Instead, the women of the homestead would quickly make enquiries to find a woman willing to adopt and nurse it. Such a woman had to be one not already nursing her own baby, as that would be tantamount to having twins, which was taboo. Usually a young barren woman, or a middle-aged woman not past childbearing would adopt the child, and the child's legal father would provide a ram for sacrifice "to make the child take the breast" (*kũgwatithia mwana nyondo*). The Kikuyu claimed that a barren woman who adopted a baby in this way nearly always lactated within a day or two, simply from the psychological fact of having a baby to look after. Such a child grew up with its adopted mother, and if it was a girl, all the sacrifices and ceremonies

connected with her marriage arrangements took place at the hut of the adopted mother, who, at this time was entitled to a fee of ten ordinary goats and sheep and one stall-fattened animal, to reward her for having reared the child. When a boy child was adopted he returned to his father's homestead when he was old enough to look after himself, and the woman who had nursed and reared him was given a stall-fattened animal and a pot of honey as her reward.

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If a Baby was Still-born, Prematurely Born, or Died before the Period of Seclusion was Over

A baby that was still-born or born prematurely (and therefore dead from the Kikuyu point of view, for such a baby never survived more than a day or two, although the mother always tried to save it), or if it died before the period of its mother's seclusion was over, it was treated as a miscarriage (*kĩhuno*). There was no sacrifice of *ndũrũme ya mũciairĩ* (the ram for one who had recently given birth), but instead a ram was slaughtered called *ndũrũme ya taatha* (the ram to provide stomach contents).

When such a ram was cut up, part of its blood was set aside and its fat was immediately rendered down, while the whole of the undigested stomach contents were taken out and the juices from them squeezed into a pot and mixed with water. Into this were put the roots of the plant called *njogu ya iria* and some leaves of *mũthigiũ*. This mixture was boiled, cooled, and then strained and reheated. The fat and the blood of the ram were then added and the whole stirred, until it became a sort of tonic soup (*thathi*). The woman had to drink this potion from time to time, but if she liked she could dilute it with some soup made from the meat of the ram. All the meat of the ram, except for the intestines, the head, both half-saddle joints with part of the scapulae attached, and the feet, was set aside for her use. The potion made from the stomach contents was said to be an excellent tonic to make the woman strong again after a miscarriage. It was also a mild purgative, which she needed at this time. It could not be used as a tonic for a woman who was suckling, because it would affect the baby through the milk.

A woman whose baby died at birth, or soon after, expressed some of the milk from her breasts each day to relieve the pain and the pressure. She was also advised to chew young, raw yams of the *mũcara* variety, the juice of which had the effect of drying up her milk (*igatũma ahiũkie*).

If a Baby was Born without Eyes, Proper Sex Organs, or was Very Abnormal in some other Way

In the event of a very abnormal child being born, it was never allowed live, but was thrown out into the bush, after first having its mouth stuffed with leaves to suffocate it. The mother would not usually (p.528) object, for she was no more desirous of having such an abnormal infant than the father was. Such a mother was treated as though she had had a miscarriage, but before her husband could sleep with her again, some other man had to do so. On the other hand, if a baby was born only slightly abnormal, as with six fingers instead of five, or six toes, or a lump on its forehead, or a harelip, this was not regarded as unlucky or unfortunate, and no special ceremony was performed. Such children were not called *kĩrema* or *kĩũgũ* (a congenital freak or informed child), but they were usually given special nick-names, thus a six-fingered child was Gacanja, and a harelipped child Gĩthenya.

Birth of Twins (*Mahatha*)

Twins that were born to a woman who had already had one or more single children were not regarded as unlucky, and both were reared, the mother suckling both, but only carrying one at a time on her back. The other was carried and looked after by someone else. Such a birth was not

regarded as abnormal, but there were certain special customs involved. For example, at the naming ceremony both children had to be named either after the father's family or after the mother's family. It was not considered right to name one after the mother's family and the other after the father's, since this division of names would bring misfortune. Also, after such a birth the father could not perform the ceremonial sex act of *gũtinia mĩruru* himself, but had to invite a friend to do so for him.

Twins were regarded as a single person, and when the second birth ceremony was performed, only one ram was slaughtered for both of them. Similarly, when they were put to board with someone. for initiation, only one fee was paid for the initiation of both. Throughout their lives they had to be treated as one. If one was given a present, then the other had to be given an identical one, and so on. If the twins were both girls, on the day that one was married, the other was married symbolically (see Chapter 19).

When twins were born to a woman at her first delivery however, it was considered unfortunate in the extreme, and a sure sign that either the father or the mother would die soon unless both twins were killed immediately and the whole affair treated as a miscarriage. Such twins were suffocated by the midwife.

In actual practice, both twins were not always killed, for if the midwife was skilful, she concealed the fact that twins had been born, stifled one of them, carried it out with the afterbirth, and kept silent, (p.529) thus leaving the impression that only one baby had been born. If, however, any of the attendant women noticed that twins had been born, this could not be done, for the matter might come to light later.

If one of a pair of twins was still-born, the birth did not count as twins, and the still-born child was disposed of with the afterbirth, under a *mũthakwa* bush. A still-born child or a miscarried foetus was called *thigira*, and if both twins were suffocated the local population was not told that twins had been born, but simply that *thigira* had been thrown away.

If one of a pair of twins was still-born, or if the midwife managed secretly to destroy and dispose of one with the afterbirth, the ceremony proceeded as for a normal birth, save only that the midwife would have to be purified later.

Dead twins, still-born children, and miscarried foetuses were always taken out of the homestead through a hole in the fence, and not via the main entrance.

Birth of Triplets

Occasionally, triplets were born, and provided they were not born to a woman at her first delivery, only one of the three would be suffocated and the other two treated as twins. If triplets were born to a woman at her first delivery, all three had to be destroyed.

If a Baby was Born Feet First, in a Caul, with a Tooth or Teeth already Cut, or with a Marked Birthmark

Such abnormal births as those listed above were regarded by the Kikuyu as unlucky, but not so much so as to necessitate killing the child as in the case of twins. In most respects the customs and ceremonies connected with such births were no different from the normal, except in the following. As soon as the midwife realised what had happened, and before she cut the cord, she sent for the father or his representative, and told him secretly, at the same time demanding that a small ram or ewe be slaughtered at once. She then had a rawhide bracelet put on her left hand and performed

the ceremony of cutting the cord. On the day of the shaving ceremony she shaved the mother and the child as usual, but when offered the gruel, *njahĩ* beans, and other things that were her normal fee, she made some excuse not to take them then, saying she would fetch them on another day. She had meanwhile (p.530) arranged with the child's father to have a medicine-man standing by, and as soon as she had shaved the mother and child, she went off to meet this man and he performed a purification ceremony for her. Unlike most other purification ceremonies, this did not, however, involve the slaughter of an animal. The woman was purified merely with water and magic powders.

The other major difference was that when the time came for the ceremonial sex act of *gũtinia mĩruru ya mwana*, the woman's husband might not perform it, but had to invite some other man to act for him. This man, who had to be a member of the husband's age-group, was not told that he was to perform a purification ceremony, in case he might refuse. He was simply offered hospitality for the night and told he could go and sleep in such-and-such a wife's hut. The woman, however, had been warned in advance, and she wooed him and induced him to have intercourse with her twice in order to get herself purified. This act, when performed by a man other than the husband was *kũhakania mũthuuriwe* (a coming between she and her husband).

Later, at the second birth ceremonies, the husband again might not perform the required ceremonial sex act, but had to summon a member of his age-group to act in his place. When such a child was old enough to leave its mother, it was sent to live with a grandmother, or else to the men's hut. The child could eat, but not sleep, in its mother's hut, for it was believed that if the child slept in its mother's hut, this would cause the next baby to be abnormal too. Such an abnormal child was called *kĩũgũ* or *kĩrema* (a congenital freak or ill-formed child).

If the Baby should Accidentally be Born on to the Ground and not into its Mother's Cloak

It was the absolute duty of every person who acted as a midwife or who attended a maternity case to make sure that the baby was born into its mother's cloak, and did not touch the ground. If, despite all precautions, the baby did fall to the ground, this was a very serious matter, entailing the following ceremony.

The midwife sent a message immediately to the child's father or whoever was representing him, and told him what had happened. This man then summoned two council elders, and while they were being fetched, he killed "a goat or sheep for picking up the baby" (*mbũri ya kuoya mwana*). On arrival the elders were told what had happened, and one went immediately to fetch the end bud of a bunch of *mũtahato* bananas. Any enquiry as to the reason for the slaughter of the (p.531) goat or sheep at this stage was met with the reply, "Some of the blood from the birth has gone into the fire". That was also a serious matter, but not so serious as a baby falling to the ground, and so it could be admitted. When the animal was slaughtered, its stomach contents were removed and three strips were made from its stomach lining. Carrying these things and the banana bud, both elders entered the hut where the accident had occurred. This was one of the rare occasions when a male might enter a hut where a birth was taking place. One elder held the bud and the other the stomach contents and the rawhide strips. The bud was dropped where the baby had touched the ground, and when this happened the midwife exclaimed, "*Mwana arĩ kũgũa, reke ndĩmuoye*". (The baby has fallen to the ground, let me pick it up.) The mother replied, "*Aca, reke mũthuuri wa kĩama akoe*". (No, let a council elder pick it up.) Then the elder carrying the stomach contents sprinkled some of this over the bud, which was then called *mwana* (child), and he picked it up and put it on the mother's lap with the real baby. The second elder then took the three strips and put one on the baby's left arm if a girl, or right if a boy, one on the mother's left arm, and the third on the midwife's

left arm. Having done this, the elders solemnly took the bud which was now referred to as, "The child that fell to the ground", carried it out of the hut and out of the homestead, and deposited it in the bush. By so doing they had disposed of the unclean baby that had fallen to the ground, and left behind in the hut a baby that had been ceremonially changed, and had not fallen to the ground at all.

Until this ceremony was complete, the real baby could not have its cord cut or be washed and put to its mother's breast. The rest of the procedure was as for a normal birth. The meat of the animal that had been slaughtered could only be roasted, and could be eaten only by the two council elders and the attendant women. When the time came for the ceremony of sexual intercourse, the father had to get some other man to perform it for him.

If any of the Blood from the Birth got into the Hearth

Sometimes a little of the blood of the woman in childbirth got into the fire accidentally. This was a serious matter that could be cleansed only by the sacrifice of a small goat or sheep. The father was immediately informed, and called in an elder to help him. They slaughtered the animal and rubbed some of its stomach contents all over a piece of the meat from the animal, and this was then put to burn in the fire. (p.532) Those joints which were normally boiled were put in a pot on the fire. This completed the purification, and in other respects the birth ceremonies went on as normal, save that the ceremonial sex act had to be performed by a man other than the father of the child.

If a Baby was Born in the Fields or in the Bush

Normally, when a Kikuyu woman knew that her time was near, she did not venture far from home, but she continued with most of her normal duties, such as drawing water, carrying loads of firewood, and going to the fields to bring in food. In fact, if the other women in the village noticed that a pregnant woman was spending too much time sitting in her home and not taking exercise, they would exhort her to work, lest she grow stiff and fat and so have a difficult birth. In particular they wanted to ensure that the muscles round her pelvis remained elastic and in good condition "so that the pelvic bones would let go" (*nĩguo honge irekanie*).

It therefore sometimes happened that a woman was seized by labour pains while she was out in the fields, or fetching water or firewood. If she could not get back to her hut she proceeded to give birth where she was. The procedure to be adopted depended entirely upon whether the first person to find her and come to her aid was a married man, a married woman, a girl, a warrior, or a child. Each of these possibilities must therefore be examined separately.

If the First Person to appear was a Married man. A married man finding a woman in the midst of giving birth immediately turned midwife (the only time when a man was allowed to perform this function). He took the woman's cloak from her back and held it so that the baby was born into it and not on to the ground, which would have been unlucky. He helped the woman as well as he could, and when she could be left alone, he went off and summoned a woman from the nearest village to come and help her and the child. The man was not allowed to cut the cord, so he had to find a woman to perform this service. She came bringing water and a razor, but she had to pretend to cut the cord with a piece of *mũthakwa* or *mũkenia* wood and to tie it with a bit of *mũkeũ* bark, as in a normal birth, before she actually cut it with the razor. The mother and baby were then helped to the nearest village, carried if necessary.

In the circumstances described above, the woman would probably be very far from her own home, or she would have called for help, (p.533) and the nearest homestead to which she could be taken was likely to be that of the man who had found her. There she had to be taken into the men's hut or that of a woman past childbearing age, since a woman who had not been purified after giving birth could not enter the hut of a woman of childbearing age without causing her grave danger.

The owner of the homestead to which the woman was taken had to provide a sacrificial ram immediately, called *ndũrũme ya mũciairĩ*. He also had to supply the bunch of bananas and the sugar-cane, even though he was neither the husband nor a relative. By the act of taking her into his homestead, he had temporarily assumed the responsibilities of husband, but he enquired of the woman where her own home was, and sent a messenger to fetch some of the women of her husband's village to come and tend her during the seclusion.

The woman remained in this hut until her period of seclusion was over and the naming ceremony had taken place. The woman's husband was not allowed to come and ask, "*Mwona ũũ*?" (Whom have you seen). The attendant women simply named the child without any special ceremony.

When the period of seclusion was over, the woman and her baby were escorted home, so that the shaving ceremony that ended the seclusion could be carried out at her husband's home in the normal way, after which her husband took a ram to the homestead where she had been secluded and gave it to the owner to be slaughtered. This ram was called, "A ram for sweeping away the uncleanness of birth" (*ndũrũme ya kũhaata mĩruru*), and it was slaughtered by the men of the homestead where the woman had been secluded, in order to provide the *taatha* (undigested stomach contents) for the ceremonial sweeping of the hut where the woman had been secluded. This ceremonial sweeping was performed as follows. A council elder was summoned and given the stomach contents on a big *mũthakwa* leaf, and also four empty leaves of the same plant. Taking these he entered the hut and put one leaf down by the bed where the woman had slept, one by the hearth, one by the door, and one outside in the courtyard near the doorway. He then took a little *taatha* from the leaf he was carrying in his hand and put some in each of the four empty leaves that were on the ground. Having done this, he took the rest of the *taatha* to the eat by the bed, and taking a pinch of it in his fingers, he stooped down and picked up the leaf. He then did the same with each of the other leaves in turn, till he had all four in his hands. As he picked up each leaf and its contents he said, "I have swept away the uncleanness of birth, lest it crush the homestead". (*Ndahaata mĩruru ndĩkae gũthetha mũciĩ*). Then he solemnly carried the leaves out of the homestead and (p.534) hid them in the bush, saying, "I have thrown away the uncleanness of birth". (*Nĩndate mĩruru*.) The woman's husband (who had to be present) then cut off a piece of fat and put it on the fire in the hearth of the hut to burn itself away. This completed the cleansing of the hut.

The woman's husband and any men who accompanied him when he came for this ceremony were given one shoulder, one half-saddle joint, some of the intestines, some of the liver, and part of the rumen to eat. The owner of the homestead and his friends ate the other roasted meat, while the joints that were normally boiled were put to boil in the hut where the woman had been secluded, even though it might be a men's hut where meat was never normally put to boil.

In addition to the matters already described, after the mother and baby had been taken home, the proceedings differed from those of a normal birth in the following respects. 1. At the shaving ceremony only the mother and child were shaved, for the "midwife" was the man who had first come to the mother's aid. 2. The mother and child were shaved by the midwife who would normally have attended the birth, if things had gone according to plan. 3. The midwife was given fees and

treated in every respect, other than being shaved, as though she had been present at the birth. 4. The man at whose home the mother and child had been secluded, brought a ram of his own to be slaughtered. (This was the second, as he had already provided one when the woman was brought into his homestead.) This ram was to cement and honour a very special bond of friendship that had now started between him and the baby. It was, in fact, a present for the baby. The baby had to be the first to "taste" it by having a little of the blood put on its hps.

If the baby was a girl, she should eventually be married as a first wife by one of the sons of the man in whose home the mother had been secluded. Whether the baby was a boy or girl, the man stood in a very special relationship to it, and had always to be called in to any feast or beer drink that was connected with the child; for example, at the ceremony of the second birth, or of initiation.

If the First Person to appear was a Married Woman. If a pregnant woman was out with another woman and she was suddenly seized by labour pains, or if she was out alone and was found by a woman, or by a number of women, they acted as midwives to her on the spot. Having done so and having cut the cord and hidden the placenta, they helped her to her own home, carrying her or supporting her (*gũtiirithia*). They did not take her to any other village or homestead. All subsequent ceremonies then proceeded as for a normal birth, or, (p.535) if the birth was abnormal in other respects, in accordance with whatever the custom was for such abnormal births.

If the First Person to appear was an Unmarried Man, Unmarried Girl, or a Child If any of these was the first person to come upon a woman in childbirth in the fields or in the bush, he or she had to sound the alarm immediately, in order to summon the aid of a married man or woman. If there was any village within reach they could run and summon help. If a warrior or an unmarried girl realised that the baby was just about to be born, they would take the woman's own cloak and hold it so that the baby was born into it and not on to the ground, but they would have to take care to avert their eyes so as not to see what was happening, for in unmarried people that was immodest. Once married help was obtained, the subsequent procedure would depend upon whether it was a married man or a married woman who came first on the scene.

Birth of a Child to an Unmarried Mother

In spite of the Kikuyu law forbidding a man to have full sexual intercourse with an unmarried girl, it did sometimes happen, and sometimes a girl became pregnant when she was not married, or even betrothed. There were definite laws as to the fine that could be exacted as penalty for this, but we are only concerned in this chapter with the customs connected with the birth of a child to such a person.

Sometimes a girl who had had one child out of normal wedlock had a second in similar circumstances. Such a girl had little chance of ever having a normal marriage, and a hut was built for her in her father's homestead. She then continued to have children by any man whom she chose to take as a lover.

If a young girl was unmarried and pregnant for the first time, the birth took place in her mother's hut if her mother was alive and past childbearing age. Otherwise, a special small hut was built for her behind her mother's hut and here she gave birth to her baby. This special hut was not spoken of as her *nyũmba*, but as her *thingira* or men's hut, since *nyũmba* was a word used to describe the home of a married woman. Apart from these minor differences, such a girl had her baby according to the normal customs for married women, with the exception of the following.

The girl's father, or if he was not alive, her eldest brother, had to provide the animals for the sacrifices which otherwise would have (p.536) been provided by the husband. The man who caused her pregnancy had no place whatever in the ceremonies. It was her father or brother who went to fetch her the bananas, sugar-cane, and yams, and it was he who played the part of husband when the baby was given its womb name.

When the month was over, and the ceremony of sexual intercourse had to take place, her father or her brother called in a man who was not a relation to perform this purification ceremony. Usually they consulted with the girl and suggested to her the names of various men from which she would choose one whom she would like to have intercourse with.

The first of such babies, if a boy, was named after the girl's father, and the second, if a girl, after the girl's mother. No child born to an unmarried mother was ever named after its physical father's family.

If a woman had two children out of normal wedlock, a proper married woman's hut was built for her in the homestead of her eldest married brother. Here she lived thereafter and could have as many children as she liked, by one or more lovers. A recognised lover was called *mwendia-rũgĩa* or *gĩtharia*, and was allowed to live in the hut with her and help her in various household tasks and in cultivation, but had no rights to the children he begot. The only part such a man played in the ceremonies after birth was that of having the ceremonial sexual intercourse at the end of the month. Such a recognised lover who lived in the hut with the unmarried woman had to observe the law of continence during the month following birth.

If a Baby was Born to the Wife of a "Female Husband"

In certain circumstances, as described in detail in Chapter 19, an older woman could marry one or more "wives", and these wives had children, by men chosen or approved by the legal "female husband". When a birth took place in such circumstances the husband (since she was a woman) could be actually present in the hut when the birth was taking place, and she was allowed to assist the midwife. It was she who provided the various sacrificial animals. The bananas that custom required should be brought by the husband of the woman who had given birth, had to be brought by a man delegated by the female husband, but it was she who gave instructions as to which bunch he should cut.

Since the husband, being a female, was present in the hut, there was no need to send for anyone to come and ask the question, "*Mwona* (p.537) *ũũ*?" (Whom have you seen?). The female husband simply named the child according to custom, and she spoke the name aloud as the cord was cut. The child's physical father was allowed to perform the ceremonial sexual intercourse at the end of the month, but he played no other part in the ceremonies at all, other than slaughtering and cutting up the sacrificial ram, which was provided by the female husband and not by the physical father.

If a Baby was Born to a Woman Living with a Serf (*Ndungata*)

In certain circumstances a poor man became the serf of a wealthy man, and often, in the course of time, he was provided with a wife. This could happen in one of two ways. If the rich man had a female dependant living in his homestead, such as a young widow of his father's or an unmarried daughter, he could invite the serf to marry her. Alternatively, he could offer to pay the marriage insurance necessary to obtain a wife for his serf. In the former case, the serf, as the physical father of any children born of the union, was expected to perform all the duties that normally fell upon a legal father, except that he did not have to provide the ram for sacrifice, which was provided by

the rich man on whom the woman was dependent. The serf, however, was the one who enquired whether the child was a boy or a girl, and what its name was to be, and he also provided the bunch of bananas.

The children of such a union were not named after any member of their physical father's (the serf's) family, but only after the members of the rich man's family. The only exception to this was in the case of a daughter living in her father's home, who had already been legally married (see below).

If, as in the second case above, the rich man had provided a bride for his serf by paying the marriage insurance for him, thus treating him as his son, then the serf was the legal father (and probably the physical father) of the children born. They would then be named after the serf's family.

If a Baby was Born to a Married Woman who was Separated from her Husband but not Divorced

In certain circumstances, as set out in Chapter 19, a woman could decide to leave her husband and go back to live in her own home. (p.538) Her father then built her a hut in which to live, and she could have children by a lover. In such circumstances, if a baby was born, the child belonged to the legal husband's family. It was therefore named after the husband's family at the naming ceremony, in spite of the fact that the woman might have been separated from her husband for many years.

The sacrificial ram was, however, provided by the woman's family and not by her legal husband or her lover, and at the naming ceremony it was the girl's mother who asked the questions. It was also the girl's mother or some other woman (or sometimes even the lover) who was sent to fetch her the bunch of bananas and the sugar-cane. The baby's physical father was called in to perform the ceremonial sexual intercourse at the end of the month.

If a Widow had Children Born to her after her Husband's Death

If a woman was widowed when she was not yet past childbearing age, but old enough to have sons who were already initiated, her eldest son inherited the responsibility for looking after her. He built her a hut in his homestead, but she retained the right, and indeed was expected, to have intercourse with men of her deceased husband's age-group. When a child was born to such a widow, either begotten by the deceased husband or by one of the men of his age-group, the child, if it was a son, had to be named after the deceased husband himself, "*Nĩ getha amũriũkie*", that is, "in order to bring him to life again", or keep his name alive. A daughter was named in accordance with the ordinary rules of naming as though the deceased husband was still alive.

When a man died leaving a young wife with no initiated children, the responsibility for her was normally inherited by one of the deceased's older sons by another wife. In some cases a young widow was inherited by the brother of the deceased, who had to treat her as his legal wife, although not necessarily as his physical wife. In this case also, the first male child born to such a widow was named after the deceased husband, but any other children that she bore were named in accordance with the normal rules, using the family names of the man who had inherited her, and whose wife she now was.

If the Husband Suspected that the Child was illegitimate

If a man suspected that the baby about to be born was not begotten (p.539) by him or by a member of his age-group, but by an adulterer (*gĩtharia*), he questioned his wife before the actual birth took place. If she confessed and named the adulterer, he was dealt with by the council elders as

described in Chapter 23. However, if the woman maintained that the child was legitimate, then nothing further was done until the birth was taking place.

The husband then called the midwife to him and told her that he was sure the child about to be born was begotten by an adulterer, and that the woman had refused to confess who the father· was. He had to give his reasons for this belief. If the midwife agreed that he was probably right, she first questioned the mother before the delivery took place, and tried to make her confess. If the mother refused, she waited until the child had been born and was on the mother's lap waiting for the ceremony of cutting its cord and naming it. She then suddenly told all the attendant women to leave the hut, and pretended to do the same, thus abandoning the woman with an unnamed baby and the cord uncut. The mother, seeing her plight, would then confess or give a satisfactory explanation, such as naming a member of her husband's age-group.

If she confessed that the baby's physical father was a man not of her husband's age-group, the midwife and attendants continued with the proceedings, but, meanwhile, the man who had been named was sent for and was confronted with the confession. If he admitted it was true, he had to pay a fine and provide certain sacrificial animals. If he refused, the matter would be tried before the council elders when the woman was fit again.

In such cases, if the baby, the mother, or both, died, the physical father, being an adulterer, was held liable and had to pay damages and costs.

Infancy

Although a baby was washed in cold water immediately after birth in order to make it cry and show that it was alive, for the next several months it was normally washed with warm water. When it was about four months old it was considered strong enough to be washed in cold water, and thenceforward warm water was no longer used.

No attempt was ever made to make a baby clean in its habits, and it both urinated and defecated as and when it liked—on its mother's back, while at the breast, or while in its mother's bed. When this happened the mother merely cleaned up the mess with soft leaves such as *maigoya*, of which she always kept a supply handy.

p.540
A Kikuyu had no cradle, but slept in its mother's bed with her even if the father came to have sexual intercourse. After weaning, the child slept in the children's bed in the mother's hut.

In addition to their mother's milk, children, from a very early age, were given ripe banana mashed with mutton fat, or masticated in the mother's mouth. If the mother had insufficient milk of her own, or if she had died and the baby was being reared by an adopted mother, it was often given cow's milk. Before feeding the baby with cow's milk, the mother or the adopted mother washed her hands thoroughly in warm water, and then put the edge of her hand to the baby's lips and let the milk dribble across her palm slowly while the baby sucked off the edge of her hand. When a baby was a little older it had a special, small, bottle-shaped gourd provided for it, and was taught to drink milk from this *kabũthũ*. If a mother's milk supply was insufficient for the baby, she was given a special gruel made from finger millet flour mixed with flour made from ground, dried cassava roots, to which was added the juice of the roots of the plant called *mũriya*. (*Mũriya* was also used to increase the milk supply of cows).

Small babies wore no clothing, and in fact a child was seldom given any kind of garment until it was weaned. On the other hand, almost every baby was given a charm to wear, to protect it from

the effects of evil eye (*gĩthemengũ*). This consisted of a little leather thong worn as a necklace, or slung over one arm and under the other, to which were tied any or all of the following: one or two cowrie shells, little bits of ostrich egg shell (*tũkenye*), little bits of the plant called *mũrigi* or *mũtĩ wa gĩthemengũ*, or little bits of wood cut from a log that had fallen across a stream. These charms were not provided by a medicine-man, but by the father of the child.

Many mothers also twisted little strings of soft fibre from the bark of the *mũtahato* banana tree, and placed these round the neck and the wrist of the babies to get them accustomed to the feeling of ornaments.

In addition to the family name that every child was given at the naming ceremony, most children were also given nicknames by the midwife and the women attending the mother at the time of delivery. Such nicknames nearly always referred to some incident connected with the birth, or with the life and habits of that member of the family after whom the baby had been named. For example, supposing that a firstborn son had been named Njoroge after his paternal grandfather, in accordance with normal custom, and supposing further that this grandfather had not died at home, but out on the Maasai plains during (p.541) some expedition or raid, the women would probably nickname the baby Wawerũ (Son of the Plains), This was not because the child self had any connection with the plains, but because the man after whom he was named had died there. Therefore this child who had taken his name (and a part of his spirit) was a Son of the Plains.

Another and very different example occurred when a woman had given birth to several babies in succession, all of whom had died at an early age. In such cases, one of two things was done to avoid the continuation of such ill luck. On the birth of the next baby, as soon as it had had the cord cut and had been given its family name, but before it was put to its mother's breast, it had one ear pierced and a small iron ring (*gacũhĩ*) put into it. Such a baby, if a boy, was nicknamed Gĩcũhĩ, and if a girl Inagĩcũhĩ. Alternatively, in such circumstances, a woman let her baby be adopted temporarily by some other woman and then "bought" it back with a bag full of castor oil seeds, a goat skin, or a gourdful of gruel. The child, if a girl, was then nicknamed Kagũre or Mũgũre, but if it was a boy it did not have any special nickname. Further examples of nicknames and the reasons for them will be found in Chapter 20.

After giving birth to a baby, a woman wore a broad leather belt tied tightly round the abdomen as a support for the womb while the muscles were regaining their strength, and to prevent the uterus prolapsing. They were also commonly given a tonic to drink and meat to eat so that they might recover their strength more quickly.

The diseases and complaints to which infants were subject and the methods of treating them are not dealt with in this chapter, but they will be found in Chapter 21. It may be mentioned here however, that if a new-born infant could not take its mother's milk, and was sick whenever it suckled, it was given a small dose of a mixture of the juices of the plants called *gathararia ita* and *kĩrago*. This caused a gentle and mild purging of the child's stomach and was said to be efficient for preventing further vomiting in newborn babies.

Barrenness in Women

Of all misfortunes that could befall a Kikuyu woman, the worst was the curse of sterility. A woman who failed to get a husband could always find some man to be her lover and the physical father of (p.542) her children, but a woman who failed to have babies, or even to conceive, was the object

of the spite of other women and the pity of her friends. She was utterly miserable. In fact, if every possible remedy had been tried and the last hope failed, such a woman often committed suicide.

There were various things believed to be the causes of barrenness in women, and as soon as a husband realised that all natural attempts to make his wife conceive had failed, he went with her to consult a medicine-man and find out what influences were working against her. Using his *mwano* (divining gourd), the medicine-man would decide which of the three common causes of sterility she was suffering from. These were: failure on the part of her family to perform some essential sacrifice or observe some essential rule or custom in connection with the rearing and upbringing of their daughter; evil thoughts and evil words spoken or thought about the girl by members of her clan; and a wilful curse put upon her by the warriors of her age-group because as a girl she had refused to please them or do as they had desired in one way or another. (See Chapter 27).

Once the medicine-man had decided which of these things was the likely cause of her sterility, the woman's husband proceeded to make the necessary arrangements for the removal of the trouble. These, of course, depended upon which of the causes had been diagnosed.

Barrenness due to the Fault of the Woman's Family

If the trouble was said to be at her father's home, he had to sacrifice a ram called *ndũrũme ya kũhaka ng'ondu* (a ram for anointing with mutton fat). On the day of the ceremony the husband had beer ready while his wife cooked *njahĩ* beans and made gruel from bulrush millet. The woman's father and mother came accompanied by at least two other elders and two women. At the woman's homestead they sat down by the granaries at the entrance, and a large brewing vessel (*ndua*) of beer that had not yet been poured off into a *kĩnya* gourd was brought to them. (The rest of the beer had been poured off by the woman's husband and his assistants before her father and the family party arrived). They were handed this beer vessel, a horn and a gourd cup, and the visiting men and women, respectively, tasted the beer in turn and then sent it back to the hut to be poured off. At this point they (p.543) handed over their ram and it was taken to the woman's hut. Next they asked for water and white *ira* powder.

Each member of the visiting party then took a mouthful of water and rinsed out his or her mouth (*kũbucabucia maĩ*), thus ceremonially washing away evil words. They next took *ira* powder and with it they all touched their tongues, the roof of their mouths, the throat, and the navel in order to wipe away evil words and thoughts that they had said and thought about the girl, thus making her barren. This ceremony was called *gwĩkundũra* (to unknot oneself). As they performed it they recited appropriate sentences like, "*Ndekundũra kanua karia kaanegenire*". (I unknot myself in respect of the mouth that chided.) Next they demanded two leafy branches to be brought by the husband, one of *mũthakwa* and one of *mũkenia*. They all rubbed *ira* powder over these, and then sipped water, and each in turn spat some of it out over the branches, thus blessing them.

At this stage the ram was brought out and they struck it on the face and the rump with these same branches. The woman's mother and father and one other man and woman from their village who had accompanied them, then led the ram round their barren daughter twice, first counter-clockwise and then clockwise. This done, they returned to the granaries while the ram was slaughtered and cut up by the woman's husband and his friends. The two branches that had been blessed were used as part of the leafy mat (*mathĩnjĩro*) on which the meat was cut up. The animal's stomach and intestines were removed whole, and before they were divided up, some of the stomach juices were squeezed out of the stomach via the oesophagus, into a half-gourd. Then the stomach was cut open

and some of the contents taken out and squeezed into this same half-gourd. The rest of the meat was now cut up and divided into joints, while the barren woman took a half-gourd of *njahĩ* beans and a gourd of gruel to her father and another to her mother, who consumed them ceremonially, still sitting by the granaries. At the same time the visiting party were given a gourdful (*kĩnya*) of beer, and each had to drink two hornfuls or gourd-cupfuls (according to sex).

When the joints of meat had been roasted they were eaten only by the members of the barren woman's present home, and not by any of the people from her girlhood home. Then after the joints that were to be boiled had been taken into her hut, the rest of the beer was brought out and handed to the girl's father and his party, who divided it up among themselves and their hosts (see Chapter 8).

When the various casual visitors had finished their beer, they departed, leaving only the intimate members of the barren woman's (p.544) family circle and those of her husband. Now she came to the centre of the courtyard where she had been encircled (*thiũrũra*) with the live ram, and this time her family went round her twice with the half-gourd containing its stomach contents, to which had now been added its hooves, burnt hair scraped off its head, and feet after they were singed, and any other odd pieces that had been cut off when the ram was jointed.

Having passed this gourd round the woman, once counter-clockwise and once clockwise (making four times in all that she had been encircled), her parents took two bunches of leaves that had been placed in this same half-gourd. One of the bunches consisted of four *mũgumo* leaves and the other of four *mũtei* leaves. They dipped these leaves into the stomach contents and the other bits and pieces, and standing behind the woman, they brushed her over twice from head to feet downwards, saying as they did so, "*Twainamia ũũru ũrĩa wĩ na mũirĩtu ũyũ*" (We turn downwards the evil in this girl). She was still technically a *mũirĩtu*, or girl, for she still had not had a baby, though married for some years). Having done this twice they then brushed her upwards from feet to top of the head with the stomach contents twice saying, "*Twagũtiira na mwago ũciare*". (We prop you up with good things that you may bear a child.) Then they stood in front of her and repeated this whole performance from the front. The barren woman was then given the half-gourd and told to put it in her storeroom and cover it up carefully. That night her husband had to repeat the performance, twice from behind and twice from in front, with his wife standing by the bed. Then two of the *mũgumo* and two of the *mũtei* leaves were placed by the entrance to the bed under the sleeping skins, and two of each by the far side of the bed also under the sleeping skins. The man and his wife had intercourse lying between these leaves. The woman's father and mother and the party that came with them were given "a ram to wipe off the *taatha*" (*ndũrũmeya kwigiria taatha*), which they did not slaughter, but took home with them. After the ceremony of removing the evil, the barren woman would become pregnant if the cause of her barrenness had been rightly diagnosed.

Barrenness due to the Fault of the Woman's Clan

If the trouble was diagnosed as being due to the unkind thoughts and words of her clan, then the following ceremony took place.

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A day was fixed for her parents, three elders, and three women of her clan to assemble at her parents' home, bringing with them any other members of the family and clan that were available. Beer had already been brewed in readiness in her mother's hut, and when the barren woman and her husband came they brought yet more beer. No ram or other animal was slaughtered for this ceremony. The elders of the woman's clan went out and collected the following things that were

needed for the ceremony: bark of the *mũkangarithi*; bark of the aerial roots (*makinya*) of the *mũgumo* tree; some fibrous bark of the *mũtahato* banana; roots of *kĩrago gĩa kĩanda*; roots of *kĩrago gĩa rũgongo;* a branch of *mũthakwa* wood; a branch of *mũkenia* wood; and some raw sinew. These eight things were laid upon a winnowing tray together with two blue beads and two white ones. Then the woman's father, three men of her clan, her mother, and the three wives of the men who were representing the clan, took their places in the middle of the courtyard to perform the ceremony while everyone else watched. They first called for water, and each of the eight people sipped a little and washed out their mouths. Then each took *ira* powder to perform the ceremony of *gwĩkundũra* as already described.

This done, the woman's father took the bark of the *mũkangarithi*, the *mũgumo*, and the *mũtahato* banana tree, and the sheep's sinew, and proceeded to roll these four components into a twisted cord by the process called *kuogotha* (see Chapter 9). This was done by a series of movements with the palm of the hand, pressing the fibres against the thigh and rolling them. With the first movement he said, "*Ndogothora ũũru ũrĩa wagwatire mwana wakwa okorũo he na handũ magongona make maahĩtanire*". (I untwist the evil which seized my child, if there should be any occasion (place) where sacrifices made on her behalf went wrong.) Then with the second movement he said, "*Ndamuogothorera aciare*". (I untwist them that she may bear a child). With the third movement he again said, "*Ndamuogothorera aciare*". When he had done this, a small piece of string had been formed. He passed it to his wife, who proceeded to do the same, and she passed it to the next elder, and he to one of the other women, and so on until each of the four men and four women had twisted a length of this ceremonial string.

When the string was ready, the father threaded on to it, a bead which had been made from a section of the *mũthakwa* branch. As he so, he said, "*Ndahakĩra mwana ũyũ witũ maciaro aciare*". (I thread for this child of ours fruit that she may bear a child). Then he passed it to his wife, who threaded on a blue bead. Then the next elder threaded a bead made of *mũkenia* wood and the next woman a white bead. The third man put on a bead of *kĩrago kĩa rũgongo* root, the third (p.546) woman a blue bead, the fourth man a *kĩrago gĩa kĩanda* bead and the fourth woman a white bead. As each person threaded his or her **bead** he repeated the same sentence.

Then the beaded string was put on the winnowing tray and was rubbed over with *ira* powder, after which each of the four men participating in the ceremony wiped off some of this powder with mutton fat which had to be obtained from a stranger's village. Then the four women participants rubbed off the rest of it with castor oil. As each person performed this ceremony he or she said, "*Twarurĩria mwana ira agwate gũciara*". (We have wiped off the *ira* powder for this child, so that she may give birth). Then the string of beads was handed to the barren woman, and each of the eight participants proceeded to bless it and her. To do this, the men and women had to sip beer mixed with *ira* powder and finger millet. Each person, starting with the girl's mother and then her father, took a sip of this liquid and sprayed it over the necklace in the woman's hands saying something to this effect: "*Twakũrathimĩra, twagwĩkĩra ũrugarĩ, okorũo nĩ gũkũnegenera twakũnegeneire twagiria ũciare*." (We bless this for you and put heat into you if it is evil words that we used to you that prevented your bearing a child.) The women participants bound the beads round the barren woman's waist, after first ceremonially passing them twice round her, first counter-clockwise and then clockwise. Then she was handed the horn and the gourd cup and told to take a sip of beer from each. (This was one of the very few occasions when a woman was allowed to drink from a horn). The remaining beer in each of the two vessels was poured over her head and down her body, and they said to her, "*Iyũkia, nĩ mĩruru twakũhe*". (Take this, it is the

foetal waters of birth that we give you). Then the finger millet seed and the *ira* dregs that were left at the bottom of the horn and cup were smeared over her head, and she was presented with the two drinking vessels to keep in her hut. They were never to be used again for any purpose, but kept at the head of her bed until they rotted. The barren woman and her husband then went home, taking with them the bit of mutton fat and meat that had been used by the men to anoint the bead string. When she reached home and had sat down on her own stool she had to rub these two objects all over her body.

Left to themselves, the members of the woman's clan settled down to drink the beer that had been provided for the meeting, and they continued to utter blessings upon her, calling upon God to make her fertile.

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Barrenness as a Result of Curses by the Warriors

If the trouble was diagnosed as being due to a curse put upon the barren woman by the warriors while she was still unmarried, she was treated as follows.

The husband took his barren wife to her father and said, "The medicine-man states that your daughter is barren because of the curses and magic of the warriors". The father then took charge of the matter. He selected a fine fat ram as a sacrificial beast, and took it to the leaders of the warriors of that territory, and said to them, "I have come to you to ask you to *rogora* or remove the curse and the magic that you placed upon my daughter that has caused her to become barren".

The leaders would reply, "Yes, we did from time to time put a curse on (*roga*) the girls, not your daughter specifically, but a party of girls together because they angered us. It may well be that your daughter was among those who were affected".

They then fixed a day for the woman to be brought to them to have the curse removed (*rogorũo*), and they called together all the warriors concerned to come and take part. A live ram was first of all led twice round the woman, and then it was slaughtered and cut up. Its stomach and intestines were also passed round her twice, thus making four times in all that she had been encircled. This done, the animal's urinary bladder and gall bladder were cut out carefully and set on one side on a *mũthakwa* leaf, with some of the stomach contents, the third chamber of the stomach, the sacrum with the lumbar and caudal vertebrae attached, one pelvic bone with part of the leg meat attached, the fourth chamber of the stomach, the ventral sac of the rumen, the lungs, and the neck.

The warriors then consumed the rest of the meat, after which any Warrior who had not yet paid his fee for the right to put on and remove curses from girls, had to leave, and only the leaders and those who had paid their fee remained. These warriors then took the woman with them and went off to remove the curse. Two or three of the warriors were sent off to the dancing field to perform the following ceremony, taking with them some of the stomach contents, and on their way picking up a small stone, and plucking some sprays of such plants as *njegeni*, *mũrinda-ngũrũe*, *mũkenia*, *mũkengeria*, and *mũthakwa*. On arriving at the dancing field, they dug a small hole in which they buried the (p.548) stone, bound round with *njegeni* and *mũrinda-ngũrũe***.** Then, looking around him, one of them said to the others, "Was it here or there or where that we put a curse on the girls"? and one of the others said "Here", and opened the hole and exposed the stone. (This was a symbolic act for they could not possibly remember the actual hole in which seven sodom apples (*ndongu*) had been buried when they put the curse on them). The stone was then taken out of the hole and anointed with the stomach contents, while a small spray of *mũthakwa* and another of either

mũkenia or *mũkengeria* was placed in the hole instead of the stone. The hole was then filled up and stomach contents sprinkled over it and the men went off to join the others at a stream.

Meanwhile, one warrior and the barren woman had been ***sent*** ahead to the stream, carrying the meat and the bladders, while the rest of the warriors, in twos and threes, had gone to remove the curse with ceremonies similar to that just described, at points where paths crossed, and at places where the warriors had at some time put a curse on girls by cutting a root that was exposed across a path. When all the warriors had finished their tasks they also made their way to the stream, where the woman was waiting to complete the ceremony. First they put four strips made from the third chamber of the stomach on to her big toes and her middle fingers. Then they built her a symbolic hut of *mũcatha* branches. Next they put short sticks of *mũcatha* wood through the holes in both her ears, under the necklaces around her neck, under her armpits and into her waistband. She then stood in the symbolic hut while they dug a hole and lined it with banana· leaves. Into this they put some of the stomach contents and some water. Each warrior in turn then approached the woman, drew out one of the *mũcatha* sticks from around her body, dipped it into the stomach contents and water, and held it to her lips saying, "*Ndagũtahĩkia ũrogi wa aanake*". (I cleanse you from the witchcraft of the warriors). He then threw this stick away. At the end the leaders repeated this act on behalf of absent warriors.

Finally, the leading warrior took a bunch of leaves from various plants—*ũrutĩ*, *mũcingiri*, *mũkengeria*, *mũrinda-ngũrũe*, and in addition any others that the warriors had selected from those that they were accustomed to use in that territory. He dipped these into the stomach contents and water, to cleanse the woman ceremonially (*tahikia*) with them. Meanwhile all the others held on to him by his toes and his arms so as to associate themselves with him.

This done, the woman was told to wash herself in the rest of the water and stomach contents and to remove her rawhide strips. The warriors then fastened the gall bladder to her waist by her pubic apron (p.549)

and the urinary bladder to her waist at the back of her skirt. They then sent her to the medicine-man, who had been waiting to complete the purification on behalf of the woman's father. The warriors ate the joints of meat that had been brought down to the river and put one side until the ceremony was over.

The medicine-man took the woman to a second stream, never the same one as that where the warriors had performed their ceremony, and there he purified her. Afterwards he removed the urinary and gall bladders and sent her home, telling her that on no account was she to speak to any person until she had entered her own hut. (The details of this purification ccremony by the medicine-man are dealt with in Chapter 28).

The performance of this ceremony removed the curse from this particular girl, but in no way interfered with the spells on other girls who were mentioned when the stone was buried. They in due course would each have to bring a ram to the warriors in order to have the spell removed from them.

It should be noted that apart from actual barrenness, if a young woman again and again had still-born children, or miscarriages, this was also attributed to the witchcraft of the warriors, and they had to perform the ceremony for removing the curse as just described.

The methods the warriors used for removing curses from women varied considerably from one territory to another. The above account, therefore, must be taken as an example of what was done in only one place, not as the description of a recognised custom, applicable everywhere.

Birth Ceremonies among those Kikuyu who Belonged to the Ūkabi Initiation Guild

The whole of the foregoing account of birth customs and ceremonies deals only with those practised by members of the Kikuyu initiation guild, and not with those practised by that section of the community that belonged to the Ũkabi guild. The members of the second guild combined natural birth and the second birth ceremonies, and it will be more convenient, therefore, to examine their birth ceremonies in next chapter, together with their "rebirth" ceremonies.

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Introduction

The entire life of a Kikuyu was divided into distinct stages by a series of what are customarily called *rites de passage*, rites and ceremonies that marked the transition from one stage of life to the next. Of these, we have already described the first, the naming ceremony which accompanied the cutting of the umbilical cord of a new-born baby. It culminated, so far as the baby was concerned, in the ceremonial shaving of the heads of the infant and its mother on the fourth or fifth day after the birth, according to sex. Until this first *rite de passage* was accomplished, the new-born child was not recognised as a human being. As we have seen, twins that were to be destroyed, or abnormal monstrosities, did not have the cord cut, and were treated as miscarriages.

Just as the ceremonies accompanying birth marked the transition of the infant from mere foetus into a human being and thus a member of the family, with a family name of its own, so the next ceremony marked the passage of the child from being a member of the family in the physical sense only, to being a full member of the family with a spirit as well as a body. This was the ceremony known by various names including *gũciarũo rĩngĩ* (to be born again), *gũciarũo na mbũri* (to be born by means of a sheep), and *gũciarũo keri* (to be born a second time). Until this second birth had taken place the child had no separate identity of its own. It was, as it were, only an extension of its mother.

The time at which the ceremony took place varied considerably according to the wishes of the parents and the special circumstances of the family concerned. Thus, in one family it might be customary to perform the second birth ceremony when a child was about two and a half years old, while in another it seldom took place before a child was 10 or 11 years old. One thing, however, was compulsory by the traditional custom of the whole tribe, and that was that the second birth ceremony had to precede initiation into adult status. Only on some very rare and accidental occasions was a child initiated into manhood or womanhood without ever having been through the

second birth ceremony. Such an individual was always spoken of as one who had (p.551) not been initiated in accordance with tribal custom, but "like a Ndorobo".

As we have already stated, the Kikuyu were divided into two main divisions, that is, those who belonged to the Ukabi guild and those who belonged to the Kikuyu guild. The customs regarding the second birth varied to some extent according to which of the two guilds the child had been born into.

The second birth ceremony was, in the eyes of the child's relatives, the most important event of childhood among the Kikuyu. We will therefore describe it first, and deal with other aspects of childhood later.

The Second Birth Ceremony according to the Customs of the Kikuyu Initiation Guild

In speaking of the customs relating to the second birth ceremony, it was often said that the child was put back into its mother's womb (*mwana acokagio ihu-inĩ rĩa nyina*). This was, however, nothing more than a figure of speech. What actually happened was that the child was once more ceremonially linked and identified with its mother, and was then ceremonially separated from its mother, and the links that united the two as one person were severed for ever.

Until a child had been through the second birth ceremony, its death did not effect its father, but only its mother. It was the mother who had to dispose of the corpse, and only the mother who had to be purified afterwards. Similarly, until a child had been born again, it had to sleep in its mother's hut and in her bed whenever there was any ceremony or sacrifice linked with that hut. At such times the child could not sleep in the hut of any co-wife or in the father's hut. Once the child had been reborn, however, its presence was no longer essential [a]t any ceremony or sacrifice connected with its mother, but only in connection with a ceremony or sacrifice involving the whole family.

In general practice—apart from a few families who by family custom postponed second birth ceremonies until a child was 10 or 11 years old—the second birth ceremony was usually performed before the child more than four years old. This was because people might say, "This child is now beginning to understand things; it is therefore unseemly that it should sleep in the same bed as its mother when her husband comes in to have ceremonial sexual intercourse with her", as required in connection with a sacrifice, or ceremony which was centred in her hut.

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When a child's parents decided that the time had come for it to be born again, the father asked the mother to obtain a new and evenly, shaped *koiga* (small half-gourd), some bulrush millet grain, and some *njahĩ* beans. He also asked her to arrange with three or four women wh$_0$ had already had at least one of their children born again to come and be present on the appointed day. Only such women could participate in the ceremony, but other younger women who belonged to the homestead might help in preparing gruel and in cooking some of the meats that had to be boiled.

On the appointed day the father selected a fat ram for sacrifice. He also invited a few council elders to come and help him in cutting up the ram and to advise him lest he should omit any part of the ceremony. He then went out and collected four *mũgumo* leaves and four *mũtei* leaves, or alternatively, four small branches of each of these. The number of leaves or branches had no connection with the sex of the child: it was always four whether the child was a boy or a girl.

The usual time for this ceremony to take place was early afternoon, and in most families the members of the homestead could do what they liked that morning. However, in some cases the mother and the child that was to be "born again" had to remain secluded in the hut all day.

When the time for the sacrifice came, the father tied the leaves or branches he had collected into two bunches. Into each bunch he put two *mũgumo* and two *mũtei* leaves or branches and tied them firmly with *mũgumo* bark. The sacrificial animal was then brought out and the father of the child had to suffocate it himself and pierce its breast to draw off the blood. He could then hand over the task of skinning and cutting up the animal to the council elders who had come to assist him, and to any other elders attached to the homestead.

When the animal had been cut up and its stomach and entrails removed, the father sent for the new small half-gourd, and into this he put his two bunches of leaves. Then he squeezed some of the stomach juices from the stomach into the small half-gourd. This done, the stomach was opened and some of the undigested contents were also squeezed into the half-gourd.

The stomach contents from which the juice had been squeezed, together with the rest of the stomach contents, were placed in a big cooking pot. The father then took the skin and stomach, and with the help of the council elders, cut two long strips, one from the skin, and the other from the stomach. These had to be taken from the right side of the animal if the child to be reborn was a boy, and from the left side if it was a girl. These strips were put into the small half-gourd (p.553) with the stomach juices and the leaves, and were taken into the hut where the mother and the child were waiting.

The father and his assistants then squeezed out the contents of the intestines and put the intestines on to some *mũthakwa* leaves. These leaves, with the contents, were then hidden among the leaves that formed the *mathĩnjĩro*, or mat of leaves on which the meat was being cut up. Next, the father and elders selected from the joints of the slaughtered animal one half-saddle joint (*ikengeto*) and one foreleg or shoulder (*guoko*), which had to have the foot attached. Once again these had to be from the right side of the animal if the child was a boy and from the left if it was a girl. The joints were tied together, a small bunch of sweet potato vine or a small bunch of grass added, and the whole taken and hung up in the storeroom of the hut where the ceremony was to be performed. These joints were thereafter referred to as *mbũri* as though they were a live animal, and as though the sweet potato vine or grass that accompanied them was to be eaten by this "sheep" while waiting in the storeroom. This "sheep" would be killed and eaten in a very private ceremony in the hut after dark. (This particular custom was omitted in certain clans and families).

At this stage the father and the elders roasted the following joints in the courtyard: the second foreleg, the second half-saddle joint, such parts of the intestines which were not set aside for the second birth ceremony proper, the liver, the kidneys, the last cervical and first four thoracic vertebrae, and part of the stomach. All the remaining joints were boiled by the women attending the ceremony. The mother was not allowed to do anything herself, as she was "unclean" owing to the fact that she was about to "give birth".

When the above joints had been roasted, the father cut from the half-saddle joint four pieces of meat. These were put into a half-gourd and sent into the hut, where the mother ate two of them and the child the other two. The father also cut off a piece of meat for the "midwife", which he put into a separate half-gourd. Then he too ate a small piece of meat from the ribs and scapula. When this ceremonial tasting of the neat was over, those who had assembled in the courtyard could start eating, but not before.

The fuel that was used for roasting the meat in the courtyard had to have been collected by males, either boys, warriors, or the council elders themselves. The ordinary firewood stored in the various

huts "right not be used, although the males sometimes collected firewood from the stacks under the eaves. This, however, was not strictly correct procedure.

As the males ate the roasted meat in the courtyard, they placed (p.554) every bone into the pot in which the stomach contents had been placed. Into this they also put the eyes, the gall bladder, the hair scraped off the head and feet after singeing, the hooves, and the horns. The skin of the sacrificial animal could not in any circumstances be pegged out that day, but had to be put aside until the next day.

When the meat had all been roasted and eaten, the wood forming the roasting platform, the skewers, and the leaves that had served as a mat upon which the meat was cut up had all to be put into the big pot and kept in it until next day.

After the mother and child had eaten their meat in the hut and while the elders were eating the roasted joints outside in the courtyard, the women in charge of the ceremony took the intestines that had been hidden in the mat of leaves into the mother's hut. They made her sit down on a stool, and any child or children born to her after the child being born again had to sit on her left on the ground, and the child undergoing rebirth sat beyond them, naked.

At this point the officiating women wound the intestines round the mother and the children to symbolize that they were still all one person. A midwife was then called in to come and deliver the woman and cut the cord. If possible this midwife would be the same midwife who had officiated at the real birth of the child some years before, but if she was not available, another might act for her. The midwife took a splinter of *mũthakwa* wood or *mũkenia* wood, stood in front of the woman, and, taking hold of the intestines of the sheep, proceeded to perform the ceremony of "cutting the cord". She did this exactly as in the case of a real birth, cutting four times for a girl and five times for a boy, saying, "*Ndatua*" (I give a name), at each cut, to which the other women replied, "*Tua*" (Give a name). With the last cut the midwife added the child's name, and severed the intestines, which were removed and were then spoken of as the afterbirth.

If the child was named after a dead relative at birth, then at the second birth ceremony it received that name and that name only. If it had originally been named after a living relative, then it could not be called by that name now, but had to be named after another person, who was already dead. This person need not necessarily have been a relative, but was preferably someone famous for his wealth and skill at arms or for some other attribute of greatness. This was to ensure that the child being born again should—by symbolic magic—be wealthy and warlike.

When the intestines were finally cut, they were cut only with the wooden knife, this being different from the real birth at which the actual cutting—after going through the motions with a wooden (p.555) splinter—was done with a razor. The point where the cut was made was anointed with castor oil in exactly the same way as when the real cord was cut. The sheep's intestines that symbolized the afterbirth were then taken away in leaves and put in the *kwerũ* (where the goats and sheep slept) at the foot end of the mother's bed, and covered over with a broken pot to prevent them being removed by rats. The wooden splinter was put with them.

The "new-born" child then got up and went to its mother's knees, where it was ceremonially washed with cold water. It had to cry to show that it was now alive.

After the "baby" had been washed, or in some families, before it had been washed and made to cry, the women took the two rawhide strips and put them over its chest from the right shoulder to

the left armpit. This was the same whether the child was male or female, and then all the women present in the hut uttered the *ngemi* (ululation) as they had done when the child was given its name.

The meat that was boiling on the fire was taken off and the joints put into a winnowing tray. The father was called in and he cut off a little bit of meat from one joint and ate it. This was a ceremonial act, *nyama itikaraare itarĩ ngerie* (lest the meat wait overnight untasted). He then went out again, and the mother tasted a little piece off the same joint. The women who were officiating at the second birth ceremony then cut the fourth chamber of the stomach and drank the liquid in which the joints had been boiled. After this the women dispersed to their own homes to sleep, leaving only the mother and her children in the hut. The father might not sleep in that hut, nor might he go to any of his other wives or to any woman, but had to sleep in his own hut that night.

Before she went to sleep, the mother put two small bottle gourds (*mbũthũ*) outside the door of her hut. Two children, a boy and a girl, both of whom had to have undergone rebirth already, and who often were selected from some other homestead, had been warned that early next morning they were to come to this hut without waking anyone. They were to take these gourds to the river, fill them with ʷater, and cork them with *mũtei* leaves. By the time the children had done this the people of the homestead were up and about, and the mother of the child being born again had to go out to meet them at the homestead entrance, carrying a *kĩnandũ* gourd of fresh castor oil. She received the gourds of water from them, and then anointed them with castor oil on the chest, after which she preceded them to her hut. She put the gourds of water on the right-hand side of the doorway, that is, the children's bedroom side, under the eaves, and then took the two (p.556) children into the hut, where she gave them some gruel made from bulrush millet, and some cooked *njahĩ* beans for their breakfast. The two children were then dismissed with the injunction to return in the evening at the time when the goats came home "in order that they may perform their duties" (*marute wĩra wao*). These duties involved the boy bringing with him a little bow of *mũtei* or *mũkeũ* wood strung with *mũkeũ* bark, and an arrow of *mũkenia* wood. The girl had to bring a little bundle of firewood, again of *mũkeũ* and *mũtei* wood and tied with *mũkeu* bark.

When the children had been dismissed, the father came into the courtyard where the sacrificial fire had been on the previous day, called for embers to be brought from the woman's hut, and with them lit a fire. Then one of the women who had been helping at the ceremony the day before brought out the leaves on which the animal had been cut up, and the pot in which the stomach contents, skewers, etc. had been placed, and finally, the boiled joints on the winnowing tray. The father divided the joints up as follows. He put the sacrum with the lumbar and caudal vertebrae attached (*rũcuthĩ*), together with one pelvic bone with part of the leg meat attached (*rũhonge*), and the ventral sac of the rumen (*mũromo wa ihu*), into one half-gourd and sent this into the hut to be put temporarily in the storeroom. Then he put the legs and other joints that were the women's portion into another half-gourd and sent them into the hut to be eaten by the women.

Meanwhile, the elders who had been in attendance on the previous day returned, and with the husband they ate the head and certain other joints, dividing the rest among any warriors and boys who were present. A little of the water brought from the river by the boy and girl that morning was then poured into a half-gourd and in it the men ceremonially washed their hands after eating. Then the father took some *mũthakwa* and *mũkeũ* wood from among the skewers and the wood which had been used for the roasting platform, and from them he cut four pegs (*nyambo*) for pegging out the skin. This was now brought to him and he drove in two pegs at the neck end and two at the tail end, after which he let the other elders complete the task.

Later in the day, when the skin was dry, the father had to unpeg it himself and remove the hair at one corner, and from it he cut off two little bits of hide (*tũtamĩ*). One of these was fastened to a corner of the mother's cloak and the other to a corner of the child's garment. These *ndamĩ* remained on the garments until they dropped off.

Next some of the attendant women, but not the mother, started preparing various foods, such as gruel and *njahĩ* beans, and one woman went to the fields to get a bunch of *mũtahato*, *mũtika*, or *mũthĩrĩrĩ* bananas, (p.557) as well as some sugar-cane, called *gĩa kwerũhia mahuti* (to make the rubbish white), and some yams.

Another woman proceeded to shave the heads of the mother, the child and the midwife, in that order. The child's head was then washed with some of the water drawn by the children in the morning.

After having her head shaved, the mother swept out the hut and carried away the "afterbirth", the leaves, and any rubbish that was on the ground, and the child that had been born again had to accompany her in everything she did. She threw the rubbish on to the midden, and she also took the stomach contents and the other things that had been placed in the pot on the previous day and threw them away, together with the leaves on which the meat had been cut up, and the wood of the roasting platform.

In the later afternoon the mother and child performed the ceremony of *kũmaathithia mwana* (fetching food for the child). One of the co-wives had already been to the fields and dug up some sweet potatoes and other garden produce, and had brought them to the vicinity of the homestead and left them there. The mother and child now carried these home, and they were taken to her hut and cooked for the child.

Later still, all the women feasted upon the food they had been preparing, and then the top hand of the banana bunch (*mwahũ wa ngo*) that had been fetched was cut off, and this, together with a gourd of gruel, and a half-gourd of cooked *njahi* beans, was taken to the midwife's home as her fee.

Towards evening, before the goats and sheep came home, the boy and girl returned carrying the bow and arrow and the bunch of firewood respectively. The mother met them and "bought" these articles with *njahĩ* beans. She hung the bow over the doorway of her hut, in the *rũri* (porch), and put the firewood on the drying shelf over the fireplace. The children were then dismissed.

At dusk, everyone who did not belong to that homestead went away except for one council elder and his wife. They, with the father, entered the woman's hut for the next stage of the proceedings. The half-gourd containing the sheep's sacrum with the lumbar and caudal vertebrae attached (*rũcuthĩ*), the pelvic bone, and the ventral sac of the rumen, was brought into the middle of the hut. The council elder took up the *rũcuthĩ*, to which the other joint, the pelvic bone with part of the leg meat (*rũhonge*) had been left attached, and bit off two mouth-fals. He then passed the joint to the father, who bit off another two. 1 hen the joint was replaced in the half-gourd and the elder severed the *rũhonge* from the *rũcuthĩ*. He also cut some of the meat from the *rũcuthĩ*, and this was given to the women to eat, while he and the (p.558) husband finished the remainder. Next the *mũromo wa ihu* (ventral sac of the rumen) was cut up and eaten by the elder, the father, and the women. The elder and his wife then departed, leaving the husband and wife alone in the hut with their children.

They now ceremonially ate some *njahĩ* beans, and drank some gruel together, and after this, in those families and clans which made a practice of hanging up certain joints and referring to them as *mbũri* they proceeded to sacrifice this "live goat" in the following way.

During the day the father had picked a few leaves of *mũthakwa* on which to lay the joints, and a few sticks of *mũkeũ* to build a roasting platform. He now laid the "goat" on the mat of leaves, cut it up, and put the meat to roast on a little roasting platform built over the hearth stones. He also added to the fire some of the firewood brought by the girl in the evening.

When the meat was roasted, the father, mother, and any children present who belonged to that hut, including grown-up unmarried daughters, proceeded to eat this family sacrifice, and when all the meat had been eaten the leaves and skewers were put in the storeroom to be thrown away next morning. The children, other than the one who had just been born again, retired to the children's bed, and the father took the backbone of the meat they had eaten earlier and put it at the head end of the mother's bed, where it remained until it rotted or till the hut was pulled down.

Whether or not the "goat" was sacrificed as above, the ceremony then proceeded as follows. The mother produced two wristlets, each with two blue and two white beads strung on a piece of sinew from the sacrificial animal, which she had been wearing during the day. The father tied one to the child's right wrist and the mother tied the other on the child's left wrist. This done, he asked the mother to bring the small half-gourd containing the stomach juices and the two bunches of sacred leaves from the ceremony of the previous day, and while the wife held these the father "cleansed" the child with the stomach juices.

For this the child stood at the entrance to the mother's bed while the father took one of the bunches of leaves in each hand and dipped them into the stomach juices. He twice wiped the child's body from head to foot; this was called *kũinamia* (to turn downwards). Then he twice wiped the child's body from feet to head, this being called *gũtiira mwana* (to prop the child up). Then the father took the half- gourd while the mother repeated the same performance, after which the child was sent to join the others in the girls' bedroom. This done, the father untied the bundle of leaves and put them back loose in the (p.559) half-gourd**,** which was placed by the woman at the head end of the bed with the backbone.

The parents had now given new life to their child, who had become a complete person (*mũndũ mũgima*). The parents then retired to the mother's bed and that night they had to have ceremonial sexual intercourse twice. This was called *kũruta igongona rĩa gũciara mwana* (to make a sacrifice for bearing a child). None of the men who had taken any part in the ceremonies might sleep with any wife or other woman, nor could they eat any meat that had been sacrificed in connection with any other ceremony, until the day after the parents had had this ceremonial sexual intercourse.

Next morning the child was instructed to take off its rawhide strips before getting up, and to leave them in the girls' bedroom, where they would eventually be eaten by rats.

At last came the final ceremony. The mother and one of her co-wives, followed by the child, went from the homestead to the gardens of some person other than a member of the family, where they dug up a sweet potato or a yam, and then returned home again. This was called *kuumagaria mwana* (to see the child on its way). On their return the mother prepared some gruel for the first time since the ceremonies started, thus symbolizing her return to normal life. Then the mother took the beads off the child's wrists and threaded them on to one of her own necklaces. From then on the child was independent of its mother and was a complete person in its own right. If it was a boy, he would

henceforth sleep in his father's hut, and if a girl in the girls' bedroom, but never again in its mother's bed.

The pot in which the stomach contents had been kept during the ceremonies had to be cleansed. This was done by cooking either sweet potatoes or edible arums in it. This first meal cooked in that pot could not on any account be eaten by any person other than the members of the family who lived in the woman's hut, or her husband, who would come from the men's hut to share the food with the mother and her children.

Second Birth Ceremonies in Abnormal Circumstances

The Second Birth Ceremony for Twins

tt twins were to be born again they went through the ceremony together and were treated as though they were one individual. Thus, (p.560) when the time came to put the beads on their wrists, two bead wristlets were made as before, but each twin wore only one. Again, only two rawhide strips were cut, and each twin wore one, "for they are one person", and to cut four strips and put two on each would be to recognise their separate individuality.

The Second Birth Ceremony of an Adopted Child

If an orphan had been adopted and reared by a woman past child- bearing, when the time came for its second birth, an elder of the foster mother's age-group was asked to act as the child's father in place of its legal father. These two people acted as though they were the actual father and mother, except only that the legal father provided the necessary ram for sacrifice.

The Second Birth Ceremony of a Child whose Mother was Dead

If a child lost its mother after it had been weaned, but before its rebirth, then one of its deceased mother's co-wives would participate in the ceremony in her place. Alternatively, the father might choose a woman of another homestead who was about to have a second birth ceremony for a child of her own. In such a case the father of the orphan provided the ram and the children were put through the ceremony together. Not being twins, however, there had to be four rawhide strips made (two for each), four wristlets, and two small half-gourds for stomach juices.

The Second Birth Ceremony of a Castaway

If a baby had been abandoned because its mother had died while giving birth, and if it had been rescued and adopted by some other woman, it had to be treated in all respects, including the rebirth ceremony, as the child of that woman.

The Second Birth Ceremony for a Child Born Abnormally

If a child had been born in an abnormal manner necessitating that the sex act of *gũtinia mĩruru ya mwana* (ending the uncleannesses of (p.561) birth) be performed by some man other than the legal father, then the sex act required at the rebirth ceremony had also to be performed by an outsider. The legal father could do all the things required of him except that, and he had to introduce the person who was substituting him in the ceremonial sex act secretly and after dark, lest the world at large should get to know that the child was abnormal.

The Second Birth Ceremony for the Child of a Serf

If the child to be born again was the child of a serf (*ndungata*) living as the physical husband of a woman in the homestead of the wealthy man whom he served, then the serf and the child's mother

jointly performed the necessary rites and ceremonies, but the wealthy man provided the sacrificial animal.

The Second Birth for a Child whose Legal Father was a Woman

If the child that was to be born again was the child of a woman married to a female husband, then the female husband arranged for some male to act as father during the whole of the rebirth ceremony, but she provided the sacrificial animal. Unless the physical father of the child was too young to participate in sacrificial acts, i.e. not yet a second grade elder, he would normally be the person chosen. Otherwise the female husband had to find a council elder to act for her.

The Second Birth Ceremony for a Child whose Mother and Father were Separated, or for a Child who had no Father

If the child to be born again was the child of a woman living permanently in her parents' home because she had left her legal husband, whether she had been divorced or not, then the part of the father in the rebirth ceremony had to be taken by some elder of the same age-group as her husband. If, however, she had never been married but was having children in her parents' homestead, then at the rebirth ceremony the part of legal father had to be taken by a man who was married to a woman of her own age-group. The choice of a man was made in consultation with the woman herself.

p.562
The Second Birth Ceremony for the Child of a Great Polygamist

In the rare case of a child to be born again who was the legal child of a very wealthy polygamist with, say, forty or more wives, then the ceremony could probably not be carried out by the legal father at all. This was particularly true because no man might perform two ceremonial sex acts during the waxing and waning of a single moon whether such a sex act was in connection with rebirth or with any of the many other occasions which required such a performance. A rich polygamist usually therefore assigned certain of his family responsibilities to members of his own age-group. The only thing he had to do, however, was to provide the necessary sacrificial animal.

Birth and Second Birth Ceremonies according to the Customs of the Ũkabi Initiation Guild

The birth and rebirth ceremonies of the Ũkabi initiation guild had been so modified, and were so much simpler than those of the Kikuyu guild, that their significance as a *rite de passage* was greatly obscured.

The rebirth ceremonies in the Kikuyu guild always followed the child's weaning, sometimes soon after and sometimes not for several years, but in the Ũkabi guild rebirth was so closely linked with the actual physical birth that we can consider them together.

The pre-natal arrangements for women of either guild did not differ significantly, and midwives of either guild could officiate at the birth ceremonies of any woman.

The first major difference between the Kikuyu and Ũkabi guild customs was in the ceremony of cutting the umbilical cord. In the Ũkabi guild a piece of stem of *mũkengeria* took the place of the splinter of *mũthakwa* or *mũkenia* wood. The second difference was that the cord was tied with a piece of sheep or goat sinew instead of with *mũkei* bark. The sinew had to have been obtained from a sheep or a goat which had not been slaughtered for a sacrifice, but only for a meat feast.

The cutting of the cord and the naming of the child followed the same practice in the case of both guilds, but in the Ũkabi guild, after the gift of bananas, yams, and sugar-cane had been brought to the hut, there was no sacrifice of a ram, nor was there any other ceremony on that day. The mother and child simply remained in seclusion for (p.563) either four or five days, according to the sex of the child, and until the subsequent shaving ceremony had taken place.

From this point on, however, the ceremonies were different. In the of the Ũkabi guild, on the morning when the seclusion was complete some of the homestead women gathered leaves of the following plants: *mũtamaiyũ*, *mũrangarĩ*, *rũrura*, *njogu ya iria*, *mũkũri*, and *mũriĩra*. They brought these leaves back to the hut where the birth had taken place and put them into a pot over the fire to make an infusion. Meanwhile the mother came out into the courtyard, where the midwife shaved her head. In some clans and sub-clans the whole head was shaved, while in others the hair was cut only round the ears, the nape of the neck, and in little "bays" over the temples called *mathi***.** After such shaving, she in turn shaved the head of her new-born infant, and then the head of the midwife.

When the shaving was over, the mother set to work to sweep out all the leaves and rubbish that had accumulated in her hut during the days of her seclusion, during which time nothing had been swept up. She had to do this slowly and make four or five journeys to the rubbish heap according to the sex of the baby.

When she had finished, the father slaughtered a ram, with the assistance of a few elders whom he had called in, and he pierced its chest to draw the blood, some of which he caught in a small gourd cup like a woman's beer drinking cup. The rest of the blood was caught in a half-gourd and used for making black puddings.

While the men were slaughtering the animal, which was partly for the birth and partly for the rebirth ceremony, the midwife went into the hut with the mother and child and washed the baby ceremonially. This ended the birth ceremony and marked the start of the second birth ceremony.

The midwife now went into the mother's bedroom while the mother sat at the entrance to it with her baby. Other women handed the midwife part of a broken pot, or a broken bit of gourd, into which they had poured the water in which the leaves had been boiled. When the liquid had cooled the mother handed the baby to the midwife, who washed it all over and wiped it with *muondwe* leaves. Then she handed the baby back to the mother, saying, "*Ke mwana, nĩwaciara*". (Take your baby, you have given birth). The mother then went to the *kwerũ* (the goats' and sheep's sleeping place) at the foot of the bed, where she in her turn washed the baby all over in the same way. When informed that the washing was over, the husband sent in the blood that was in the gourd cup, and a little of this was put to the baby's lips. Next the father sent in a little piece of roasted meat, and the mother (p.564) chewed this and put some of the meat juice to the baby's lips. This meant that the baby had eaten some of the ram slaughtered on its behalf, and the others could now start eating the meat as soon as it was ready.

While the baby was being washed, the midwife's fees, namely, a gourd of gruel, some cooked *njahĩ* beans, and a bunch of bananas, to be left outside the hut or they would be considered defiled.

Having sent the blood and the little bit of meat in for the baby, the father and the elders set to work to divide the carcass up into the joints that were for boiling and those that were to be roasted. The former were sent into the hut to be put on the fire, while the latter were put on the roasting platform in the courtyard. When the roasted meats were ready, some of them were sent into the mother and the woman in the hut. One foreleg was set aside for the midwife to take away with her, and after

the father had first eaten a small bit from the *rũhonge* (the pelvic bone with part of the leg meat attached), and had sent the rest in to the mother, the men ate the remaining roasted meat.

When the boiled joints were ready, they were immediately brought out to the men in the courtyard, and they, too, were divided up. Only the *rũcuthĩ* (the sacrum with the lumbar and caudal vertebrae) and the *mũromo wa ihu* (the ventral sac of the rumen) were put into a half-gourd and set aside. Some of the boiled meats were sent back to the women to eat.

Finally, the fat of the ram was rendered down by the women and part of it was put into a second gourd cup and was called *ngorono* (butter). This was put aside for special use next day. The rest was put into an oil gourd (*kĩnandũ*) to be used for the new baby as it was required. The midwife and the elders then departed. That night the woman and her baby slept alone and the husband slept in his hut. All of the leaves used as a mat for cutting the meat on, and the roasting platform, were left in the courtyard for the night.

On the morning of the second day, the mother's first task was to sweep up and throw away these leaves. The father and one elder then came and asked for the half-gourd which contained the *rũcuthĩ* and the *mũromo wa ihu*, and they proceeded to eat this meat without ceremony, but they again sent a part back to the mother and the women in the hut. The father and the elder then pegged out the skin and waited for it to dry, while the women of the homestead cooked all kinds of food and prepared themselves a feast.

By the afternoon the skin was dry and the father unpegged it and set to work to scrape the hair from a portion of it. He then cut off three pieces (*ndami*) of this scraped skin. These three he folded and sewed (p.565) with sinew into little bags about 2 x 1in, with a flap sewn down in such a way that a cord could be threaded under it.

Meanwhile the mother took the sinew of the animal that was slaughtered and from it made a twisted string. She also got out some blue and white beads, and, in some families, added cowrie shells as well. Towards evening the mother and father together proceeded to thread on to the sinew the following things in the order given: one of the little leather bags, a blue bead, a white bead, a little gourd disc (*karũngũcũ*), a white bead, a blue bead, and another little leather bag. Then on either side of this they threaded a dozen or more blue beads, making the whole necklace just the right size to go round the child's neck. With some more of the sinew they made up a small string of blue beads with two white ones in the centre, separated by a blue one, just big enough to go round a wrist. They also got ready a little bangle of copper or brass for the child's ankle. The third of the little leather bags was now attached to the corner of the mother's cloak, and nothing more was done until nightfall.

After dark, when there was no more likelihood of any person calling at the hut, the father and mother took the baby, and together, each holding one end of the necklace, they fastened this round the child's neck. They did likewise with the wristlet, and then the mother alone put the brass or copper anklet on the child. (In some families, in addition to the necklaces and wristlet described, a thin leather thong with two cowrie shells was put on one of the baby's wrists.) The father then asked for the fat, spoken of as butter, which had been put ready in the little gourd cup. He put some of this on his fingers and then twice rubbed it from the child's right cheek if it was a boy, up and round the right eye to the root of the nose, and over the forehead to the top of the head. This was *gũtiirĩra mwana*. The mother repeated this action twice and the father once more, making five times in all. If it was a baby girl they did the same thing four times, but started on the jet side. Then they rubbed the rest of the fat on the baby's chest and body.

Now the father spent the night in his wife's bed with the mother, but he did not necessarily have sexual contact with her that night. He might do so on that night or on any of the next three nights, but regardless of which night he chose, it was regarded as an act of ceremonial intercourse and therefore the sex act had to take place twice. Having had ceremonial sexual intercourse with his wife, the ceremonies of both birth and rebirth were over as far as the Ũkabi guild people were concerned.

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Birth and Second Birth Ceremonies in Abnormal Circumstances

In the case of abnormal births such as that of a child that fell on to the ground at birth, a child born with teeth already cut, twins born to a woman who had already had one or more single births, etc. members of the Ũkabi guild did not have such elaborate customs as the Kikuyu guild people. The father merely omitted having ceremonial sexual intercourse with his wife. He did not then call in a member of his age-group to perform this act for him, but waited until a guest came to stay the night and then offered him the hospitality of the mother's hut and told her to woo him and get him to have sexual intercourse with her, and thus remove the uncleanness (*thahu*). In this way none except the midwife, the father, and the mother ever knew that there had been an abnormal birth.

When twins were born to a woman who had not had a child before, they were treated as still-births, as among members of the Kikuyu guild. Similarly, twins born to a woman who had had other children were kept alive, as among the Kikuyu guild people, and when they had been through the birth and second birth ceremonies, only two little leather bags were made for them. But instead of only one *karũngũcũ* gourd disc, two were made, and thus each of the twins had on his or her necklace one gourd disc and one little leather bag. In addition, both twins had a leather thong with four cowrie shells on it, put on one wrist, left or right, according to the sex of the child concerned.

Sometimes, among members of the Ũkabi guild, a man who had several wives would take one twin away from its mother, and give it to one of his other wives to suckle, nurse, and rear, provided that she had no very young baby of her own at the time and that she was not pregnant. Before he could do this, however, he had to slaughter a ram and put rawhide strips on both the wives concerned, on the baby, and on himself.

When a child was born to a girl who had not married, but was living in her father's home and having children by various lovers, the father, when he found that his daughter was never going to be legally married, usually acted as follows. He sent his wife to the girl to ask what man she would like to have as a permanent lover, to live with her as her husband, help her in her gardens, and perform all ceremonial duties for her. The girl made her choice, and the man was given the girl as a matrilocal wife. It was he, then, who took the part of legal husband in all ceremonies.

p.567

In the case of a girl who was married, but who had separated from her husband without being divorced, and who had come back to live in her father's homestead, the following customs were observed by the Ũkabi guild. When she had a baby the midwife came to assist at the birth and the child was named, but no other ceremonies of any kind took place. The mother was shaved, if and when she pleased, but the child was not shaved, and it remained unshaven until it was two or three or more years old.

The girl's father then went to her legal husband and told him that the child had never had its head shaved, and had never been reborn, and he began to feel ashamed that a child who was legally his,

and who, when grown up, would be his, had not yet been born again, since as an Ũkabi guild child it ought to have been through this ceremony as an infant. He therefore produced a ram and sent an elder of his own age-group to represent him at the necessary ceremonies. These took place at the girl's father's homestead, and the man who had been deputed to take the legal father's place acted for him. The child, no matter how old it was, and the mother, were treated as though the birth had just taken place. The mother even had to go through a period of seclusion.

The logic behind this Ũkabi custom of having the second birth ceremonies so early in the life of the baby was that the death of even a small child involved uncleanness for the father and the whole family. However, as this would have been most inconvenient, the custom arose that if a small child who had been born again died, it was not counted as dead at all. It was instead taken out into the bush with a fire-brand and left with a fire burning by its side. By this subterfuge it could count as a person who had died while away from home, and therefore no shaving and purification ceremonies were involved (see details in Chapter 22).

Childhood: From Weaning to Initiation

Weaning and Children's Food

Although the main Kikuyu customs dealing with food and drink have been discussed in Chapter 8, there are certain points which may most conveniently included in this chapter on childhood.

By Kikuyu custom a woman had to take care to avoid conception (p.568) until such time as the child that she was suckling was about two years old. Thus the next child was not born until the first one was nearly three years old. In such circumstances, most children weaned themselves, because once they started to eat more ordinary foods, they ceased to want their mothers' breasts, which were practically, if not quite, dry. Sometimes, however, a child went on suckling so long that its mother decided that it had to be forcibly weaned. If she knew that another baby was due to be born soon, she rubbed snuff on her nipples and this quickly cured the child of any desire to suck.

Occasionally a woman conceived unintentionally very soon after a child was born, as a result of one of the ceremonial acts of full sexual intercourse connected with some sacrifice or other. If this happened and a new baby was thus born within a year of the previous one, the mother would not normally consent to allow both children to suckle her at once. She therefore weaned the first and reared it on a diet of gruel and ripe bananas mashed up with mutton fat.

Among members of the Ũkabi guild it was not taboo for one woman to give her breast to the child of another if the other woman was away from home, whereas among the Kikuyu guild, if a child of one woman so much as touched the breast of another with its mouth, a ram had to be slaughtered at once for purification (see Chapter 28).

Usually, when a new baby was born, the one that had just been weaned was sent to its paternal grandmother for a few months in order to relieve its own mother of the responsibility of looking after it while she had a very small baby to look after also. If this was done, however, this child that was sleeping and living at its grandmother's normally came back to its mother's hut every day for its *rũĩga*, that is, its own portion of the food cooked in her hut, which was the child's by right.

Occasionally, a child that had been weaned would be sent to its maternal grandmother's, provided that she lived close by. If she lived at any distance this was out of the question, for whenever the father wanted to have sexual intercourse with the child's mother, either for ceremonial reasons, or in the normal course of events, any child of his that had not yet been reborn had to be present in

the hut, for the child was still a "part of the mother". To have intercourse with her in the child's absence would have harmed the child.

Every child, once it was capable of feeding itself, had a portion of food "by right" at both its grandmothers' huts, at all its maternal aunts' huts, and at its mother's brothers' wives' huts, in addition to its own mother's hut. This meant that if the child was on a visit to any of the above mentioned homes, it had a portion of food served in a (p.569) dish for itself, and it did not have to accept hospitality from anyone. In any other home that a child visited, including those of its mother's co-wives and of its paternal uncles, it was given no portion of its own, but had to accept the hospitality of any other children who had a food share there by right. Owing to this custom, all boys and girls learned very early the laws and practices of hospitality. If any children came to a meal in any place where they had a portion, and another had none, they knew that they had to offer the guest a share of their food.

No matter how hungry a child was, it could not go into its mother's hut and take some of the cold cooked food that was in the food safe (*mwatũ*) unless the mother had left the door of her hut open. To open any hut door in the absence of the owner was forbidden, and would involve any person who did so in serious trouble. Any child could, however, go and take cold cooked food from its mother's granary, where she always left some cold foods for her husband and children if she was going to be out for the day. But no child could, of course, take food from the granary of any other women in that homestead.

Children could go to their mother's fields and take some sweet potatoes, a few maize cobs, etc. without permission, but any boy or girl who took a stick of sugar-cane from his or her father's sugar-cane patch would be severely punished, for this amounted to theft. This was one of the reasons why most boys had little gardens of their own. No girl prior to initiation ever had a garden of her own; she always worked with her mother in her fields and gardens, and she also worked in her brothers' gardens.

Clothing of Children

Very small boys usually had no clothing of any kind made for them, and if they were clothed at all it was with a bit of leather cut from an torn, disused cloak of their mother's. This was not worn tied on the right shoulder and passing under the left arm as the clothes of older children and grown-ups were, but had a hole cut in it and was dipped over the head on to the child's neck.

By the time a boy was about five years old he was usually considered big enough to have a special garment of his own made for him. This was made from a single goat skin with the hair left on, and was usually made carefully with a reinforced seam, just like a man's *gĩthii***.** As a boy grew bigger and older he gradually had bigger cloaks made for (p.570) him, and by the time he was ready for initiation he probably had a four skin *gĩthii*. No uninitiated boy's cloak could be made so long that it came below the knees when he was standing in a normal position.

As soon as very young girls started to run about the compound they were provided with a little pubic apron. By the time a girl was four or five years old she was usually given, in addition, a little soft tanned leather cloak shaped exactly like her mother's, but usually made from a large number of small odd bits of leather, sewn together into a patchwork without any plan or special arrangement. As she grew bigger she began to have special cloaks made for her from two goat or sheep skins, but in no circumstances could any girl, while still a child and uninitiated, wear a skirt (*mũthuru*).

Ornaments

Boys were not usually given much in the way of ornaments by their parents until the time came for them to participate in the pre-initiation dances, but they were encouraged to make a certain number of ornaments for themselves. For instance, they commonly plaited themselves a waist ornament called *rĩĩndũrĩ* (made from string and sorghum bark), and another called *mũnyiro* which they wore round the forehead, while below the knees they wore similar ornaments called *mbĩĩrũ*, made of the grass called *nyeki ya mbĩĩrũ*. They also made necklaces of beads made from *ngũnyi*, the seeds of the *mũkũnyi* plant.

When a boy was a little older his father occasionally gave him a goat or sheep skin so that he could buy himself ankle bells (*njingiri*), and also go to a wire worker to get iron chain to make himself a *mũnyoro* belt, and perhaps an iron or copper bracelet or two.

Boys also made bead necklaces of *kĩrago* root nodules, and sometimes from the stem ends of gourds, like the *mũmbũthũ* necklaces worn by girls. For dances such as the *ngũcũ* and *mũhĩĩro*, the boys had more ornaments and also head-dresses, but these need not be further discussed here as they have been listed in Chapter 11. The ear plugs worn by boys and the method of piercing the ears, etc. have been described in Chapter 10.

Girls were provided with more ornaments than boys even when they were quite young. Most little girls were given a wristlet called *gacomoya* for each wrist, iron anklets called *ndogonye*, bead necklaces, and very often a small leather belt ornamented with cowrie shells. They also often made *mũmbũthũ* necklaces. When they went to dances such as (p.571) *ngũcũ* they borrowed all sorts of ornaments from their initiated sisters or other female relatives. In their ears they wore *nyori* (bits of stem of thatch-grass or sorghum) and in the lobes of the ears wooden ear plugs.

Beauty

The various forms of tattooing and cicatrisation that were practised on boys and girls during childhood, and the extraction of teeth, etc. have been described in Chapter 10. It may, however, be pointed out that many women held that the cutting of the *ng'athi* on the *mons veneris* of little girls served a double purpose. It was not only meant to provide them with something that would later be attractive to their male partners, but it also got them used to the idea of exposing their genitalia and having a cut made on the skin, thus making them less likely to show fear when the time came for their initiation and the accompanying operation of clitoridectomy.

Some informants further maintained that if the women of the homestead found that any young uninitiated girl was allowing the boys to attempt intercourse with her, they would cut eight *ng'athi* on her *mons veneris* instead of four and thus brand her for all time as one who had been disobedient to the rules of behaviour laid down for girls. This was certainly not a universal custom among the South Kikuyu, but was restricted to certain localities as a purely local custom.

Children's Work

The most important tasks done by boys, and those regarded as their main work, were the herding of goats and sheep and assisting the warriors in the herding and protecting of cattle. At harvest time, too, boys were required to spend all day helping to scare birds from the corn. In spite of these tasks, all boys had a good deal of spare time when they were not required to do any particular work for the family. This due to the Kikuyu custom of not allowing anyone to herd stock of any kind for more than six consecutive days.

formally, if there were several boys in one family or in a homestead, a boy had one or two weeks free from herding work at regular intervals, and most boys, when they were old enough, would undertake cultivation on their own. In fact, boys were expected to have their own small (p.572) gardens in which they grew not only men's crops such as sugar-cane and yams, but also some women's crops such as sweet potatoes. With the food grown in these gardens, it was customary for Kikuyu boys to provide feasts for their companions, and also to provide yams and potatoes for the warriors who came to call on their older brothers.

Boys who grew sugar-cane in any quantity in their own gardens were usually able to sell this to their fathers for beer making, and most boys, by the time they came to be initiated, owned a few goats and sheep by virtue of the sale of the produce from their gardens.

Naturally, boys spent a lot of time trapping and playing games. Trapping was carried out chiefly with a view to getting tasty food to relieve the monotony of the roast potatoes that were all they were normally given to take with them when they went herding cattle, goats, or sheep. Besides trapping doves and pigeons, it was a regular custom for the herd boys to pick the big fat ticks off the cattle and roast and eat them as dainties. These fat ticks, gorged with the blood of the cattle, were really little more than miniature black puddings, and the idea of eating them did not revolt the Kikuyu at all. Boys also caught and cooked for themselves various kinds of locusts and grasshoppers, and flying white ants when they were in season.

Another task that was commonly, though not universally, assigned to the boys was the picking of bunches of sweet potato vine and of such creepers as *mahũrũra* and *mũkengeria* for the goats and sheep to eat in the homestead.

Girls' work consisted for the most part in assisting their mothers in all the ordinary household tasks, thus learning to become good housewives and mothers, and from a very early age they were made to act as nurses to their younger brothers and sisters. They carried these young children about on their backs, played with them when they cried, and generally looked after them.

They also had to help their mothers in collecting fuel for the home, drawing water from the streams, carrying food from the gardens, and sweeping out the homestead.

All girls, too, helped their mothers in the preparation of food, and so learned the culinary arts, rules, and taboos, and as soon as they were old enough they were required to start to learn how to manipulate the saddle quern grindstones in the preparation of flour, and how to pound corn in the wooden mortars without over-exertion.

It was the duty of every boy and girl to be present whenever a family sacrifice of any kind was due to take place. However, in practice, boys (but not girls) who had been through the second birth ceremony were sometimes exempt.

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Games and Recreation

As small children, both boys and girls spent a lot of time playing make-believe games, and pretending to be grown up. They would build little huts of reeds and grass and into these put berries and bits of wood to represent sheep and goats, banana buds and maize cobs to represent pots and gourds, and so on. These games cannot be described in detail for naturally they were not organised, but depended upon the imagination and ingenuity of the players. But children also had many more definite games, some played by both sexes together and others by only boys or only girls. On the

whole there were more boys' games than girls' games, for the girls, as nurses of their younger brothers and sisters, had less free time.

Gĩũthi gĩa Tĩri (*The Earth Game*)

Little children of both sexes often played the game called *gĩũthi gĩa tĩri*. With his hands one child heaped up a mound of earth about 1ft long and 4in. high. Then he took a berry or a pebble in his left hand and gave the impression of transferring it to his right hand. He then picked up a handful of earth from the end of the mound and put it down as a little mound by itself. This movement was repeated until the whole of the long mound had been divided into a series of small ones. During these movements, the berry or pebble had to be skilfully inserted into one of the little mounds in such a way that the action could not be detected. Then the other child playing the game had to guess which mound it was in. If he guessed right, it was his turn to hide the berry, and the first child had to guess. If he guessed wrong, the first player played again. In principle the game was not unlike the English game of "Up Jenkins". Each child kept count of the number of times he guessed right by adding a stick to a pile by his side.

Gĩũthi kĩa Ndongu

This was the commonest of all games played by the Kikuyu, and although it was played a great deal by boys, it was not restricted to 'hem, and was also played both by the warrior classes and by elders. It was a game which was, however, never played by women or girls.

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Gĩũthi kĩa ndongu was the Kikuyu variation of the game played by almost every child in Africa and variously described in books under the titles of *mankalla*, *weso*, *bao*, etc. according to the language of the tribe under consideration. The Kikuyu variation was played as follows. The "board" consisted of two parallel rows of small holes dug in the ground, usually with six holes in each row, though the game was sometimes played with eight holes in a side. The "pieces" consisted of *ndongu* (sodom apples), the berries of the *mũtongu* plant, and normally the players started with as many pieces in each hole as there were holes on one side of the board. That is to say, if the board had six holes in each side, each player started with 36 pieces, six in each hole. The game was played by two players only, one on each side, but spectators were allowed to take sides and to advise their favourite player as to the best moves to make. The rules of the game, which were more complicated than those existing in some other tribes, were as follows:

1. At the start of the first game, each player put all his pieces into the holes on his side symmetrically, that is, six or eight in each hole according to the number of holes being used.

2. At the start of any game other than the first of a match, the player who had lost the preceding game set out his pieces on his side in any order and arrangement that he chose, but he might leave no holes empty except as provided for in Rule (4).

3. After the loser had placed such pieces as he had in the order which he chose, his opponent put out enough of his pieces to make the board symmetrical, keeping the balance in reserve.

4. If at the conclusion of any game the loser of that game had very few pieces, he had the right to reduce the field of play for that game to four, three, or two holes a side, as the case required.

5. Either player could make the first move in the first game of a match, by mutual agreement, but in subsequent games the winner of the preceding game had to move first.

6. Each player moved only in his turn, and the move was made as follows. The player whose turn it was had to pick up all the pieces in any one of the holes on his own side (although he could not pick from a hole that contained only one piece). He then started to move either in a clockwise or counter-clockwise direction, as he might elect, and place one of the pieces picked up in each successive hole, thus leaving the hole from which he picked them up, empty. He crossed over to his opponent's side when he came to the end of his own line, and then back to his own line if he had passed along (p.575) the whole length of his opponent's line. When he came to the last piece contained in his hand he put it into whatever hole he had reached. He then did one of three things, depending upon the condition and position of the hole where he put his last piece, (a) If the hole he put the last piece into was an empty one on his opponent's side, his move was over, and it was his opponent's turn to start a move, (b) If the hole that he put his last piece into was an empty one on his own side, he then captured all the pieces that were in the opponent's hole directly opposite. He then removed them from the field of play together with the piece of his that effected the capture (thus leaving both these holes empty for the time being). If, moreover, there were one or more empty holes on his own side immediately next to the empty hole into which he put his last piece, he also captured any men in his opponent's holes opposite to his empty holes, (c) If the hole into which he put his last piece (whether on his own or his opponent's side) already contained one or more pieces, then he picked them all up together with the piece he had first put in and started moving back in the reverse direction. He thus continued to move backwards and forwards until his last piece was put into a empty hole as (a) or (b) above, when his move ended either without a capture (a), or with a capture (b). It was now his opponent's turn to play.

7. If a player, playing in accordance with rule (6), completed a move without crossing into the territory of his opponent (as he might easily do in the concluding stages of any game) then he might not capture the pieces that were in the hole opposite his at the end of the move, for he could not make a capture without raiding "enemy territory". Such a move counted only as a "manoeuvre" move, and the same player immediately played again before his opponent played.

8. If a player had completed a move and it was his opponent's turn to play, but his opponent had only either single pieces or empty holes, then his opponent had to miss the move and the other player moved again straight away.

9. A game ended when one or other player had captured all the pieces, or all except two.

10. At the end of each game, each player counted his pieces including any that he had in reserve at the end of the preceding game. The one who had less than the other was the loser of that game, and if they wished to play another game they had to set out their pieces in accordance with rule (2).

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As played by the Kikuyu, both players might try to "cheat" by omitting to put a piece in a hole where it ought to be put. However, a player cheated at his own risk, and if his cheating was noticed and proved by the opponent, that is if the spectators supported the opponent, then the man who cheated lost that game, and all the pieces on the board at that time were forfeited to his opponent.

The chief skill in the game lay in starting a move with all the pieces in the correct holes, and in the setting out of the pieces at the conclusion of one game and the start of the next. A skilful player might easily win the match even though at one stage of the play he had been reduced to only a few pieces.

The game as played by the Kikuyu required considerable practice and also a specialised type of arithmetic. A good Kikuyu player was also very good and quick at deciding the best move to play when his turn came. When the champion of one district played the champion of another, a great crowd gathered to watch the play. (For further details see *White African*, Leakey, 1936.)

Singing Games

Little children who had been left behind in the homestead to play while their mothers went to the fields or in search of fuel or water, would often pass the time by playing games that were accompanied by song. One of these consisted of the children squatting on their heels, holding on to each others' shoulders, and hopping along like birds in a long row. As they did this they sang, "*Wanguire, Wangware. Kururia ciana tũkanyue maĩ ngurumo ya Thĩka*". (You carried me, Child of the francolin. Pull along the children and let us go and drink water in the valley of the Thika River.) Another version of this song was, "*Wanguire, Wangware. Tongoria tũkarĩe ngururu Thika*". (You carried me, Child of the francolin. Lead us that we may eat *ngururu* (see Botanical Appendix) at Thika.)

Another similar game consisted of forming a long line, holding each others' shoulders, and singing, "(Name of child in front position) *witũ ndeithia. Ndĩ na nyamũ ĩrĩ mũgongo yenjaga ngwacĩ ta mũndũ*". (Our name of child in front position), help me. I have an animal on my shoulders that digs up sweet potatoes like a person.) At the end of this song the person who was named and who was at the head of the line went to the tail end, and the song was sung again, mentioning this time the name of the person who was now at the head of the line, and so on until the children got tired and started some other game.

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Hide and Seek

Hide and seek played in the same way as by English children was also common pastime for children who had been left at home for the day.

Kũratha Mbara (*Spearing the Hoop*)

This was a team game played exclusively by boys and usually only by the bigger boys. Its object was to train the boys to be accurate in their aim with a spear, just as the game of single-sticks was designed to teach them sword play. This game was not confined to uninitiated boys, and was often also played by warriors. A boy who showed great proficiency in the game of throwing the spear at the hoop was much looked up to by the others, and his praises were the theme of the impromptu songs sung at children's dances such as the *ngũcũ* and *kĩbũiya*. The usual number of boys for the team was six or eight and the game required two teams.

For this game, each boy was armed with a wooden spear (*gĩcengi*) which was usually about 6-8 ft long and made of *mũbirũ* or *mũnderendu* wood. The hoop was made of *mwĩnũ* wood, and was about 1ft in diameter, or a little more. The game was played on the dancing fields, where the grass was soft and springy.

The teams stood in one long line, each player about 10yds from the next. The players of one team were at one end of the line and those of the other team were at the other end, with the two captains at the outside ends of the line.

The captain of one side took the hoop, and standing about 10-15yds in front of his line of players, he bowled the hoop down parallel to the line of opposing players and about 10-15yds in front of

them. As the hoop passed, each of the opposing team threw his spear at it with the object of transfixing it and stopping it from rolling any further. As soon as any player on one side had thus transfixed the hoop, he carefully marked the position of his feet. The captain of the side that had bowled the hoop then sent his best player to *thigũra* (transfix) the hoop. To do this, the player had to stand in the exact tracks, and exact Position, of the boy who had transfixed the hoop while it was moving, aim his spear so that it would land in the circle formed by the hoop as it lay on the ground. He was, of course, aiming at a stationary target, but it was not an easy task, for if the hoop had been speared at a distance, it was now only partly visible. If his aim was poor and he (p.578) failed to land his spear in the circle, he was taken prisoner (*kũhika*) by the opposing side, and the captain of his side had to send another of his team to try. If he also failed, he became prisoner too, and so on.

The prisoners were placed at the extreme end of the line of their captors, beyond the position of their opponents' captain, and here they had to remain until they could be "rescued" in a manner which will be described presently. If all the side were taken prisoner the game was over. If one managed to spear the stationary target, it was now the turn of the other side to bowl the hoop, and when their turn was over, the first side had the hoop again. If some of his men had been made prisoner, the captain now bowled the hoop as far as ever he could and in such a way as to make it impossible for the opposing team to spear it at all, and so to get the hoop past them all to where his prisoners were. The latter had the right to run forward to get near the hoop and then spear it. If a prisoner managed to spear the hoop, he had the right to try and escape. He therefore started to run as hard as he could in a wide circle to get back to his own side. Some of his team members dashed out to meet him, while all his captors tried to head him off. If the prisoner managed to touch one of his own side before he was touched by one of his captors, he became free once more and rejoined his side, (see Leakey, 1936.)

Single-sticks and Sword Play

Most boys devoted a certain amount of time to the practice of sword play, either with single sticks or with wooden swords. For these they made scabbards of banana bark in imitation of the warriors. In the eyes of the Kikuyu it was very important that every boy should be proficient in the use of the sword, for the sword was the real traditional fighting weapon of the Kikuyu. The idea of using spears in warfare had been borrowed from the Maasai. Although the bigger boys made bark shields called *matandara* for their mock fights, most of the younger boys used improvised shields of green banana bark.

Top Spinning

Whip tops were an innovation that was introduced after the coming of Europeans and Asians, but Kikuyu boys played the game with little tops made by sticking a long thorn of the *mũthuthi* tree through the middle of a berry such as that of the *mũbirũ*, a fruit rather like a medlar. (p.579) A number of boys spun their tops simultaneously on an oxhide, or on a hard patch of ground, and the boy whose top went on spinning longest won the round. This was called *kũbĩra mbirũ* (to rotate the *mbirũ*).

Practical Jokes

Herd boys loved playing practical jokes on their companions, and a common one, played on any boy who did not already know it, was to dig a small hole in the ground, fill it with moist cow dung, and stick a small bit of grass stem in it. The dung was then dusted over with earth, and when some

boy who had not seen this joke before came, he was challenged to pull out the grass stem with his teeth. As he bent down to do so, one of the others would push his head so that he got his face all smeared with the wet dung. This was naturally considered a great joke by all except the unfortunate victim, who would then think of some means of retaliation.

Puzzles (*Ciama*)

Both boys and girls were very fond of making puzzles for their companions to solve. These puzzles were made from bits of string, gourd, bark, etc. and there was a great variety of them. I have made no attempt to collect and study these, as they vary so much all over the country that they would have required prolonged study. Furthermore, the puzzles existing at the time of this study were not necessarily the puzzles of the last part of the nineteenth century, which is the subject of this book. The old men and women who were my informants said that they could not remember the childish things of their day. At any rate, they were not willing to make the mental effort required to recall either how they made these puzzles or how they solved them.

Riddles (*Ndaĩ*)

Both boys and girls spent much time at night asking each other riddles. This was called *kũgwatania ndaĩ* (to pass one another riddles). In asking riddles, the following set formula had to be used. The person asking the riddle had to say, "*Gwata ndaĩ*" (Take a riddle), to which the person taking up the challenge would reply, "*Ndagwata*". (I take it.) Then the propounder of the riddle would put forward a riddle couched in the (p.580) traditional phraseology, which was very often archaic Kikuyu and so only partially intelligible. Also, the riddle was often obscured by words that had a double meaning. A few examples may be given here.

Questions	Answers
Ūi, tũrĩa-i! Oh, those little things over there!	*Tũrigũ twĩrũ.* Some little ripe bananas.
Ūi, tũngĩ-ĩ! Oh, those other little things!	*Tũũĩ twĩ ngurunga.* A little water in a cave.
Ndaikia mbugi manjarara. I throw the goat bell and make a rattling noise.	*Mũiti wa njahĩ ikũmbĩ.* One who pours *njahĩ* into a granary.
Mũtĩ ũũmĩte mathũmbĩ na ũkoma gĩtina, ũkaihũga gatagatĩ. A tree that is dried up at the crown and at the bottom but is still green in the middle.	*Hĩa cia mahũngũ.* Horns and hoofs.
Ndathiĩ ũũ, ndathiũ ũũ. I go hither and thither, thus and thus.	*Njĩra cia ategi.* Trappers footpaths.
Nderi yaikarĩra mĩtĩ ĩtatũ. A vulture sits on three trees.	*Nyũngũ.* A cooking pot.

Of the many hundreds of riddles that were asked and that had definite answers, none were improvised by the players; they were all traditional. The boys and girls learned new riddles when they went visiting and then introduced them to their own circle, so adding to their repertoire. Their origin is unknown.

Fables

After dark was the only time when it was permissible for the Kikuyu to recount fairy tales and fables (*ng'ano*). Then, either while the food was cooking or after supper had been eaten, women entertained their children with these *ng'ano*, or the children exchanged fables that they had picked up at some other gathering.

The fables, folk tales, and stories classed together as *ng'ano* may be divided into four distinct groups: 1. Fables that end in a proverb. (p.581) These always had a definite point, and were meant to inculcate some idea in the mind of the listener. 2. Stories of ogres and fairies, or of fabulous doings of people and animals, that had no other purpose than to entertain the listeners. 3. Stories that recorded the actual happenings of the past, and were, in fact, traditional history. 4. Stories fables invented to explain natural phenomena which needed to be explained somehow, but which people did not fully understand.

Education

Kikuyu children, prior to their initiation, had no education in the European sense of that word, but at the same time they received a great deal of instruction from their parents.

Boys, after the second birth ceremony, were expected to sleep in their father's hut, for although they entertained and sat talking in their own small huts as described above, they never spent the nights there, and when a boy was on a visit to the homes of his companions he slept in the men's hut of that homestead.

They not only slept in these men's huts (*thingira*), but normally spent their evenings there, except when dancing or attending some party in their own or some other boy's play hut. In the *thingira* of the head of each homestead it was the custom for the elders to spend long hours in the evening talking over any news that they had heard, and discussing specific cases they had attended at the sessions of the council, or Kikuyu law and custom in general. Boys were expected to be present, and they were always expected by their fathers to listen, to learn, and to grow wise.

In addition, it was customary for fathers from time to time, when they had no guests, to spend long evenings teaching their sons, telling them about such laws and customs as their age entitled them to know and learn. In this way any boy who was keen and clever became not only knowledgeable in the laws and customs, but picked up a great deal of general knowledge and knowledge of Kikuyu legal procedure as well, for one of the favourite topics of conversation among elders was the analysis of legal cases.

Girls, on the other hand, never went into the men's hut to listen and learn from their fathers. Instead they were taught by their mothers, partly by direct instruction, and partly by the indirect method of being encouraged to listen to the discussions of the women.

Both girls' and boys' education was considerably augmented at the (p.582) time of the initiation ceremonies described in the next chapter, and they continued to learn into adult life.

Discipline

All Kikuyu children were subjected to a good deal of discipline which however, differed much from that given to European children. In spite of the fact that both boys and girls, after the second birth ceremonies, had a good deal of personal freedom, they were brought up to regard the orders of parents and adults as absolute, and any child that failed to be obedient was punished either by being whipped, or by being made to go without a meal. In serious cases they were made to sleep out in the courtyard of the home instead of inside one of the huts. This latter form of punishment

was much feared because the children were afraid of the ogres who might come and carry them off in the dark.

Also, all uninitiated boys were liable to be sent on errands, and be made to act as "fags" for any warrior who chose to order them about. Failure to obey a member of the warrior class would result in a severe thrashing. On the other hand, boys who served the members of the warrior class well got all sorts of rewards in the form of bits of meat from the warriors' meat feasts, the loan of ornaments for dancing, etc.

Girls, however, were not subject to the orders of anybody except their mothers and older sisters, and no woman or initiated girl could send a young girl to run messages for her unless she was a close relative.

Puberty Rules

There was no special rite or ceremony connected with the puberty of a boy, for the Kikuyu said that no one could know exactly when a male first reached puberty. Girls, on the other hand, had their puberty marked by the appearance of their first menses, and by Kikuyu law and custom, every girl was supposed to have been initiated into the adult status of a *mũirĩtu* before she reached puberty. As, however, initiation ceremonies were organised only once a year, it sometimes happened that a girl had her first menses before she was initiated· This was considered to be a very serious matter indeed, and the following is an account of what was done in such circumstances.

If a woman discovered—as she would certainly do—that a daughter (p.583) who was uninitiated was having her first menses, she immediately informed her husband of the fact, and from that moment until after the child had been initiated, possibly some months later, he could not so much as enter the doorway of the hut where that girl slept (that is, her mother's hut) for fear of becoming unclean. Whereas a girl who had her first menses after initiation was at once secluded until the menstrual flow was over, when she was put through the ceremony called *kuoerũo*, a girl who menstruated before initiation could not be thus secluded at her first menses, for fear that this would make other members of the family and of the village realise what had happened. At all costs the matter had to be kept secret, if possible, so as to avoid shame.

The unfortunate girl was therefore told by her mother to spend each day out in the fields by herself and on no account to mix with the other girls and boys lest they notice what had happened. At night the girl came home and hid in her mother's hut. When the period of menstrual flow was over, she resumed her normal life with the other children so that no one would suspect what had happened, but at each successive period from then until she was initiated she had to find excuses to be by herself and not to let anyone find out the truth.

When at length the season came for initiation ceremonies, the girl was not allowed to take part in the special pre-initiation dance called *gũtuuma* (see Chapter 16). If anyone asked why this was, the parents replied that they had decided that their daughter was not yet old enough to be initiated and had to wait another year. They hoped by this to allay suspicion. The next morning, when the time for the actual operation came, the girl was told by her mother to go and mix with the other candidates, and so be operated upon without revealing the fact that she had not been at the dance on the previous day.

Of course the father was also a party to this method of getting his daughter initiated without anyone suspecting that she was "unclean", so he then appeared on the scene and pretended to be very angry indeed, saying that the girl had gone off and been initiated without his consent, after he had said

she was too young, and directly ordered her to wait for another year. The other elders calmed him down, saying, "Come now, what's happened cannot be altered, pay the fees and stop making a fuss". So the girl was initiated without people knowing that anything out of the ordinary had taken place. Such a girl then proceeded with her normal life as a *mũirĩtu* without anyone being any the wiser, and nothing further happened until she was married. The details of the ceremonies that were then involved are described in Chapter 19.

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Although there was no special ceremony connected with puberty in boys, it is convenient to mention here some of the things that boys did after puberty in order to satisfy their sexual desires.

According to Kikuyu custom, boys were seldom initiated until they were 18 years old and more. As a result, there were often a number of years during which their sexual desires were great, and yet there was no outlet legally open to them. Although the younger boys up to 14 and 15 were allowed to play at sex with young girls, as we have already described, the older boys from 16 and onwards were not allowed to do so. This was partly because it was feared that they would be tempted too much and might abuse the little girls, and partly because such big boys thought it beneath their dignity to play with such small girls. However, if there were a few girls who were about 13 or 14 years old but who had not yet been initiated, and who had, for some reason, not shown any sign of having their menses, the big boys would play at sex with them, even to the extent of mutual masturbation, like the warriors and initiated girls. For the most part, however, big boys satisfied their sexual desires by self masturbation, and occasionally they would find some married woman who, through being barren, was willing to have sexual intercourse with anyone in the hope that her barrenness would come to an end. Any boy who did so had to be very careful, for if he was found out he would never be initiated in his own country, and would probably have to go to Maasai country to be initiated there.

Occasionally, too, big boys were tempted to have sexual intercourse with animals, such as goats and sheep, but this was utterly taboo, and a crime which was punishable (see Chapter 23).

Morals

As they grew older, boys and girls, prior to initiation, were allowed to play at having sexual intercourse. In fact most boys of 14 or 15 years built themselves little booths near the homestead which they proudly called their *thingira* (men's hut), and to which they invited their companions, both boys and girls, to come and eat sweet potatoes in the evening and play sexually in imitation of their initiated brothers and sisters. As the parents were fully aware of what went on and knew that these boys and girls would lie together, they constantly warned them that in no circumstance were they to attempt to have actual sexual intercourse, and that they had to content themselves with fondling (p.585) and cuddling each other. Occasionally a boy and girl would disobey his rule, and because of this many mothers would regularly examine their daughters' genitalia. Knowledge that there would be this examination from time to time was usually enough to make the little girls careful to obey the rules laid down for them. They knew that if they allowed the bigger boys to have full intercourse they would be found out and severely punished. For their part the boys were constantly warned that if they did more than simply play at sex, they would do themselves harm, and that when they were circumcised they would not heal quickly.

Naturally, both boys and girls grew up with a considerable knowledge of sex, for in addition to what they heard and saw of the behaviour of the grown-ups, they were also taught a great deal by their parents when being told of the prohibition against full sexual intercourse.

Fighting

The bigger boys of every village formed themselves into organised bands and appointed leaders from among their own number to take charge of all arrangements for the dances of the uninitiated boys and girls (see Chapter 11). Very often the appointment of a leader led to fighting because other boys would challenge his right to be the leader, and then a fight would ensue. Or again, one boy would resent being ordered about by the leader and would deliberately insult him in order to provoke a fight. If he then put up a brave resistance, even if actually beaten, he was entitled in future to refuse to obey the orders of the other. The recognised way to challenge another boy to a fight was to say to him, "*Wĩ mũriũ*" (You are my son, or sonny), as exemplified in Chapter 1.

Kikuyu boys never fought with fists but always with clubs and sticks, and so fierce were the fights that sometimes a boy was killed, and often so injured as to be unable to walk for days. A boy, however, who was afraid to fight other boys was looked upon as a great coward, and he had little chance of ever becoming a leader of the other boys, or of being respected later as a warrior.

The only accepted way of fighting, other than with sticks, was a form of all-in wrestling. Proper wrestling (*kũrũndana*) was also practised a great deal and was the recognised way of testing one's strength, or settling minor disputes.

Big uninitiated boys of 17 and 18 who were armed with wooden (p.586) spears and bark shields commonly helped the warriors of their territorial area in any inter-territorial fighting, and they also were called up and had to fight if there was a Maasai raid into Kikuyu country If, as sometimes happened, an uninitiated boy killed a Maasai warrior during such fighting, he did not dance the *kaarĩ* (see Chapter 24), but merely had his head shaved and was then purified by a medicine-man, Such a boy, however, if he belonged to a family that was of the Kikuyu initiation guild, could not be initiated and circumcised in accordance with the rites of the Kikuyu guild, but would have to be sent to be initiated by Ũkabi guild rites (see next chapter). Having been initiated and become a warrior, he would then have to go through the ceremony of being changed back to a Kikuyu guild person once more, unless he elected to remain for ever as a member of the Ũkabi guild in spite of his family's membership in the Kikuyu guild.

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Introduction

As we have already seen, the life of a Kikuyu individual was punctuated by a series of *rites de passage* which marked his progress from one stage to another in the social life of the community.

Of these *rites de passage* there was no doubt at all in the minds of the Kikuyu that the most important was the one which marked the transition from childhood to adult status, the ceremony

that is commonly spoken of as initiation, and which had its outward and visible sign in the operation of circumcision in the case of the males and clitoridectomy in the case of the females.

We have also seen in other chapters that the population of South Kikuyu was divided into two major divisions: those initiated in accordance with the Kikuyu guild custom, and those who were initiated in accordance with the Ũkabi guild custom. In all *rites de passage* we find that the customs of the members of these guilds differed somewhat, and it is therefore not in the least surprising to find that in that ceremony which marked the difference between the two guilds and which put the seal of the guild upon the individual (irrespective of whether he was born of parents belonging to the opposite guild), the differences were greater than in connection with any other series of rites and ceremonies.

In this chapter we shall first of all consider the rites and ceremonies of the Kikuyu initiation guild and we shall then turn to the ceremonies of the Ũkabi guild. Before passing to these detailed studies of the two different guilds, we must consider certain facts that affected both equally.

After the coming of Europeans it became a common practice for Kikuyu boys to undergo the operation of circumcision and to go through the initiation ceremonies at about the age of 14 or 15. It is therefore of the greatest importance to note that every Kikuyu elder consulted, was very particular and emphatic in stating that this was never the case before the coming of the white man, and that in the normal course of events no boy was allowed to undergo initiation into warriorhood until he was at least 17 or 18 years old. Moreover, those (p.588) who were to be members of the first minor division of a new major age-group (see Chapter 29), were not initiated until they were men of about 22 years of age. To allow a boy of less than 17 or 18 years to be initiated into warriorhood would indeed have been unwise, for once initiated, he would become a full member of the fighting forces of the tribe, responsible not only for defence, but also for attacks upon the Maasai and other enemies.

Girls, on the other hand, as we have already seen in the preceding chapter, were supposed to be initiated before the appearance of their first menses, and this meant that they were initiated at about 12 years old, when their breasts were only partially formed. On the other hand, it must be noted here that in their comments upon this fact, the elders said that girls now seemed to reach puberty and have their first menses at an earlier age than they did formerly, and they added, "It is because of all the salt they eat nowadays". It was also confidently stated that the medicine-men of the old days used to be summoned by a girl's parent to treat her so that she should not have her first menses at too early an age. This was called *kuoha irĩgũ* (to tie up uncircumcised girls), and they said that as a result girls grew big and strong, and had fairly well-developed breasts before they had their first menses, whereas at the time of this study, many girls menstruated before their breasts really started to form at all.

The Kikuyu Guild Preparation for Initiation

As far as the boys and girls themselves were concerned, their own preparation for initiation consisted chiefly of participating in the various dances which belonged to the *mũhĩĩro and mũũmbũro* series (see Chapter 11). The object of these dances was essentially to prepare the boys and girls for the life they would lead as adult warriors and maidens. This training was practical rather than theoretical, that is to say that the Kikuyu method of education was to make the pupils do things, and not merely give them verbal instructions and admonitions.

As warriors and maidens, a great deal of time would be spent in dancing, and although the dances of the warriors and maidens were different in certain respects from the pre-initiation dances, the latter were sufficiently similar to ensure that every participant would learn all the essential rules of movement, step, and behaviour that were of importance to them. Then again, later on, as members of the warrior and maiden classes, the boys and girls would have to take their share (p.589) in the responsibilities involved in organising dances: making the necessary arrangements, singing the solo parts, preparing their own ornaments, and adorning their bodies with red ochre. The pre-initiation dances were therefore designed to train the participants in all these things.

Some of the dances of the warriors were, as we have seen in Chapter 11 more like war exercises than true dances. This fact was also reflected in the pre-initiation dances, for we find that besides the dances for boys and girls together, there were dances in which the boys performed exercises and semi-military evolutions. Another reason for the *mũũmbũro* group of dances and the customs connected with it was that it provided the boys with a legitimate means of showing their physical strength and so annoying their parents that they would gladly consent to proceed with arrangements for their initiation in order that the lads might divert their excess energies and their strength to more profitable channels, such as raiding Maasai stock, and thereby enriching the family. The girls had no need for such displays of strength, for their initiation depended rather on their physical condition. In consequence, the part played by girls in the pre-initiation dances of the *mũũmbũro* group was small in comparison with that of the boys.

But in spite of all these efforts on the part of the would-be initiates, the most important aspects of the preparations for initiation were those that the parents made. These depended entirely upon the status of the father of the child, and each aspect must be examined separately.

Preparations for the Initiation of a First Child of a Member of the Ruling Generation

A young married man who was about to have his first child initiated could not even begin to make the necessary preparations unless he was already a council elder (*mũthuuri wa kĩama*) of the second grade, that is to say, unless he had paid to the senior elders of his area, the fee which entitled him to the rank of *mũthuuri wa mbũri igĩrĩ* (a two goat elder). formally, however, every man had become a second grade elder before there was any question of his children being old enough to be initiated.

A man who had become a second grade elder and who had his first child, either boy or girl, old enough to be initiated, and who was also a member of the ruling generation (see Chapter 29), had to (p.590) start his preparations by calling together the council elders of his village and presenting them with a fee of either a very fat ram or a very fat castrated he-goat. This was called *mbũri ya mwana* (a goat or sheep for the child), and it had to be an animal that was all of one colour, and might not have *njagatha* (little natural lobes of skin) hanging below its neck, nor might it be a *njuuru* (an animal with deformed ears). This *mbũri ya mwana* had to be provided and sacrificed at least one whole month before the child was to be initiated. This sacrifice took place as follows.

Late in the afternoon of the appointed day the council elders assembled at the home of the man who was providing the animal. They were given the ram or goat and they asked which was the hut of the mother of the child to be initiated. They then took the animal round behind her hut on the right-hand side near the position of the girls' bedroom (*kĩrĩrĩ*). The elders present might include some who had not yet themselves had a child initiated, but only men who had already paid a *mbũri ya mwana* might actually suffocate the sacrificial animal, and *ratha* it, that is, pierce its chest and draw its blood.

Once the animal had been slaughtered and cut up, all the meat was put to roast, including the fat which was on other occasions set aside for rendering down, for no fat from the *mbũri ya mwana* (except what little was left attached to the skin) might be removed from the place of sacrifice and rendered down. When all the meat was roasted, the elders proceeded to cut off a number of joints which were to be sent into the hut for the family to consume. These had to number eight if the child was a girl, or nine if a boy, and consisted of the following: one foreleg (*guoko*), one half-saddle joint (*ikengeto*), the first three ribs of one side with part of the sternum (*kĩĩga*), half the neck (*ngingo*), one pelvic bone with part of the leg meat attached (*rũhonge*), the fourth chamber of the stomach (*ngerima*), part of the intestines (*tama*), one kidney (*higo*), and, if the child was a boy, the spleen (*rwariũngũ*).

These were placed in a large half-gourd, and were covered over with a bunch of *mũthakwa* leaves, picked by whichever elder had been allotted the animal's skin. Two elders were then detailed to carry this half-gourd of joints into the hut of the woman whose child was to be initiated. Here they found the husband and handed the half-gourd to him. He handed it to his wife, who put it in the storeroom. The woman then produced some cooked *njahĩ* beans and some gruel for the two elders to consume in the hut, and some more for those who were outside and who could not yet start eating any of the roasted meats.

When the gruel and *njahĩ* beans had been eaten, the husband put the *mũthakwa* leaves on the floor of the hut, and set the joints from the (p.591) half-gourd on them. As he did so, the two elders retired and joined the her elders behind the hut, where they now started eating the meat. Meanwhile, in the hut, the husband divided the joints among his own family every bit of meat was eaten then and there.

The eating of the meat both inside and outside the hut could not start until all the goats and sheep of the homestead had been brought in from grazing, and all the members of the family, other than those specially exempt, were present in the homestead, for this was a family sacrifice.

After thus paying his *mbũri ya mwana* to the other council elders, a man who was a member of the ruling generation but who had never before had a child initiated might proceed with the further arrangements, such as arranging with whom his child should stay for the ceremony. This will be discussed below.

Preparations for the Initiation of a First Child of a Man who was not of the Ruling Generation

Any man who was not a member of the ruling generation who wanted to have his first child initiated had first of all to become a second grade elder. Then he had to pay the *mbũri ya mwana* fee as already described, after which he had to pay the fee called *mbũri ya mũkuha* (a sheep or goat for the awl). This had to be either a fat ram or a fat he-goat, but it did not have to be of one colour only or without blemish, for it was not a sacrificial animal, but merely a fee paid to the ruling generation for the right to start having his children initiated. It had to be paid at some time between the sacrifice of the *mbũri ya mwana* and the fifth day of the post-initiation training period. Normally, it was handed over well before the initiation ceremonies started, because a man knew that once these had begun he would have many other things to occupy his mind.

The man who had to pay the fee went to the man at whose homestead the child was going to stay during the initiation ceremonies, and said, "I want to pay my *mbũri ya mũkuha*". The other replied, "Bring it on such-and-such a day and meet me in the bush near here". On the appointed day, the

man paying the fee went with it, accompanied by three elders of the ruling generation from his own village and one elder of his own (non-ruling) generation. At the rendezvous he found the man at whose home the initiation was to take place, accompanied (p.592) by his two advisers (*atonyi*—literally, those who enter). These three were all of the ruling generation. Together, the six members of the ruling generation slaughtered the animal. They then cut it up and gave back to the man who had paid the fee, one half-saddle joint (*ikengeto*), one foreleg (*guoko*), part of the intestines (*mara*), part of the liver (*ini*), and one cheek, or side of the face (*rũthĩa*). He and his companion of his own generation ate these joints while the others ate the rest. The skin was taken by one or another of the advisers.

This fee having been paid, the man could proceed with the boarding and other arrangements. In some cases he postponed handing over the fee until after the actual initiation had taken place (but paid it before the fifth day of the post-initiation period). In such a case he promised the fee, and the ruling generation consented to allow him to proceed with arrangements as though it was already paid, knowing that they would not fail to receive the fee in due course, for if the fee was not paid by the fifth day of the post-initiation seclusion period, the man's child would not be allowed to complete the training, and so would be an outcast.

Preparation for the Initiation of a Child other than a First Child

Provided that a man had had one child initiated in the circumstances described above, he could go ahead with all the preparations for any other child without further fees or sacrifices, except those to be described below, unless he wished to have the initiation ceremonies centred at his own homestead, in which case special conditions were attached and a variety of other preliminary arrangements had to be made.

Arrangements for a Member of the Ruling Generation to have Initiation Ceremonies centred on his own Homestead

If a man was a member of the ruling generation and had already had one or more of his children initiated in other people's homesteads, he was entitled, if he wished to do so, to make application for permission to hold an initiation ceremony at his own homestead and to have other people send their initiation candidates to board with him.

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The reasons a man decided to hold initiation ceremonies in his homestead varied. Sometimes a rich man with many wives had children due for initiation at the same time, and he decided that, in view of this, it would be better to hold the ceremonies at his own home rather than be involved in the expense of boarding out a number of children in other people's homes. Or again, a man's father and grandfather might have been in the habit of holding initiation ceremonies in their own homes and the man therefore wished to keep the custom of the family. Also, a man might simply have been of an aspiring nature and thus, anxious to have the honour which belonged to all those who held initiation ceremonies in their own homes, and so had the right to wear the insignia of that office and hold the title of *mũruithia* (a circumciser, or one who sponsors a circumcision ceremony). No man who did not have at least one child due for initiation in a particular year might hold the ceremony at his home during that year, and normally a man was not supposed to do so unless he had a boy and a girl of his own ready for initiation that year. If, however, he was very anxious to have an initiation ceremony held in his own homestead, but had only a boy or only a girl due for initiation, he could temporarily adopt a boy or a girl candidate from some other home, so that, in theory, he had both a boy and a girl due for initiation that year.

Having decided that he wanted to have an initiation ceremony take place at his own homestead, and never having hosted such a ceremony before, a man had first of all to consult several seers (medicine-men) to find out whether the omens were propitious for him to set up as a *mũruithia*. If he got a contrary reply, he at once abandoned the project, for it was thought that to undertake an initiation in one's own home was not without dangers. It would be very foolish, therefore, to try to do so if the omens were unfavourable. If a man got a favourable reply from the seers and decided to proceed with his plan, he was required by custom to do the following things. 1. To have his insignia made by the *mwari wa icũhĩ* (maker of the insignia—literally, a maker of rings; these were special coiled earrings, which were the insignia of a *mũruithia* and his wife). 2. To provide a feast called *mwaro* at which formal conscnt was given to his plan. 3. To sacrifice the ram known as *mbũri ya gũtinia ngoro* (the goat for the cutting of the heart). 4. To make the sacrifice known as *mbũri ya gĩthaka* (the goat for the estate), which was sacrifice to God and those who were in the ground, that is, the ancestors; for their blessing. We must consider the details of each of these proceedings in order.

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Obtaining the Insignia of Office

As soon as a man had been assured by the seers that his plans would prosper, he prepared either sugar-cane or honey beer. He then sent » message to a man who was known as *mwari wa icũhĩ* (maker of the insignia), and invited him to come with one or two elders to drink beer. The man who was going to hold the initiation ceremony provided enough bronze wire to make two special pairs of coiled earrings. When the insignia maker arrived he made these. One pair was for the *mũruithia*, and one for whichever wife was the mother of the eldest among those of his children that were going to be initiated, for the whole ceremony would centre round her hut. If by any chance this was not his senior wife, she also had to have a pair of earrings made for her, for no junior wife could don them if the senior wife did not also possess a pair.

When the earrings had been made, they were placed upon a winnowing tray and the maker proceeded to "bless them" by spitting beer over them and by rubbing them with a little piece of fat meat. This done, the man and his wife donned the insignia, fastening them with the leather and brass wire ornament that was known as *njũũgũ* (see Chapter 9). The maker of the insignia was given a goat skin as a fee, and then he and his companions, and the owner of the homestead and his companions, all proceeded to drink the beer specially made for the occasion. That night after the party had broken up, the man and his wife who had received the insignia had to have ceremonial sexual intercourse twice as an *igongona* (sacrificial act).

The Mwaro Feast

The object of the *mwaro* feast was dual. In the first place, if the senior elders who were invited came to it, they thereby signified their consent to the man's plans to hold an initiation at his own homestead. This permitted him to proceed to the next two ceremonies. Secondly, by holding the *mwaro* feast he made it known to everybody in the district that an initiation was shortly to take place in his own homestead, and therefore every father who had a boy or girl whom he wanted to board out (*hithia*) for initiation, would know that the man giving the feast was now in a position to have initiation candidates board with him.

The man and his family, in preparation for the *mwaro* feast, prepared large quantities of beer—both of sugar-cane juice and honey—and (p.595) quantities of cooked *njahĩ* beans and of gruel made from bulrush millet. He and his wives also invited all their friends, relations, and relations-

in-law to bring contributions to the feast, as a great quantity of beer and ceremonial foods would be required. When the preparations were ready and the day had been fixed, invitations to the *mwaro* were sent to all available members of the ruling generation and also to all the members of the man's *nyũmba* or immediate family and sub-clan. These people would be the principal guests, and their acceptance or rejection of the invitation determined whether or not the plans for initiation would proceed at that homestead. In addition, invitations were sent to all the council elders in the neighbourhood.

On the morning of the day appointed, the man who was providing the feast arranged with one senior elder who was already a *mũruithia* to come with his senior wife to act as adviser (*mũtonyi*) and see that everything was done correctly and in the right order. This adviser and assistant was said to come *kũheana igongona na icio* (to give the sacrifice), but this *mũtonyi* must not be confused with the two *atonyi* who were to be formal advisers when the time for the initiation ceremonies came. The man who acted as adviser on the day of the *mwaro* feast was only rarely invited to be one of the two *atonyi* for the initiation proceedings.

When all the guests had assembled, the man providing the feast and his adviser proceeded to give orders for the assembled company to divide up into groups.

The *athuuri a nyũmba*, or elders who were members of the family or sub-clan of the man providing the feast, were made to sit down in the centre of the courtyard facing the hut which would be the headquarters of the initiation proceedings.

The *athuuri a riika*, or elders of the ruling generation, were made to sit facing the headquarters hut but on the right-hand side of the courtyard, i.e. on the side of the hut where the girls slept (*kĩrĩrĩ*).

Six or sometimes eight men were selected from the assembled company to be *athuuri a thome*, and sit by the granaries on the right- and side of the homestead entrance (*thome*). These men had to be selected from the regiment age-group, either senior or junior to that of the man providing the feast, and no two of them might belong to the same initiation age-group within the regiment age-group selected. (Thus, if the man providing the feast belonged, for example, to the *Mbira* regiment age-group, the *athuuri a thome* had to be chosen either from the *Mbũgũa* regiment age-group which was immediately senior to this, or from the *Kĩenjeku* regiment age-group which was immediately junior.

The *atumia a nyũmba*, or women belonging to the family or sub-clan, were taken to sit in the centre of the courtyard, but on the left, or (p.596) *kwerũ*, side of the headquarters hut, i.e. the side where the goats' and sheep's sleeping place was.

The *atumia a riika*, or senior wives of the men of the ruling generation who had come with them, were placed together in the centre of the courtyard between the *atumia a nyũmba* and the *athuuri a nyũmba*.

Six or eight men called "the people to drive away the flies" (*andũ a kũrira ngi*) had to be drawn mainly from members of the regiment age. group (*riika*) to which the man providing the feast belonged, including one man from each of the initiation age-groups. (See Chapter 29). These six or eight men had to sit' near the door of the headquarters hut but on the *kwerũ* side, i.e. the side on which the goats and sheep slept.

Four or six *athuuri a gũtonya nyũmba*, or "elders to enter the hut" had to be chosen from among the regiment age-group to which the man providing the feast belonged, and they waited by the granaries until they were called into the headquarters hut.

There were also other elders of the council who had come as casual guests and who were entitled to the *mũrora* (gourd of beer set aside for uninvited elders).

When everybody had been accommodated, one very big *ndua* (brewing gourd) of beer was set before the *athuuri a nyũmba*, who appointed two of their number to pour it off. Everyone else looked on in silence, and, once filled, the big, broad-based *kĩnya* gourds were temporarily taken back to the headquarters hut. Then another big *ndua* was brought out to the *athuuri a riika* and they also poured it off and took it back to the headquarters hut temporarily.

This done, the man who was providing the feast, together with his wife and the adviser with his wife, proceeded to distribute beer and food. First they took the *kĩnya* gourds of beer that were poured off by the *athuuri a nyũmba*, a gourd full of gruel, and a big half-gourd of cooked *njahĩ* beans. They went in solemn procession to the *athuuri a nyũmba* and set these things down in front of one of the elders in that group, other than one of those who had poured off the beer. The man before whom the food and beer was placed was not chosen at random) but had to be a man who was himself a *mũruithia* (one who had had an initiation ceremony at his own home), and who had been of the same status as the host of this feast when he first became a *mũruithia*. (That is to say, if the host of the feast was becoming a *mũruithia* on the occasion of the initiation of his second eldest daughter or second eldest son, then the man chosen also had to be one who became a *mũruithia* when his second eldest daughter or his second eldest son was due for initiation).

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Having had these things placed before him, the man selected took few of the cooked *njahĩ* beans and ate them, and then took a second very small handful and ate these too. This done, he gave a few to his host, who chewed and ate them, and then he gave his host a second small handful, which he also chewed and ate. Next, he took two sips from the gourd of gruel that had been placed before him, and handed it to his host, who also drank twice from it. Then the same man drank twice from one of the *kĩnya* gourds of beer, and gave it to his host to drink from twice. This ceremonial "communion" showed formally that the *athuuri a nyũmba*, through their representative, consented to the host undertaking an initiation ceremony in his own home.

Now the man and his wife, with his adviser and his wife, returned in procession to the headquarters hut and brought out the *kĩnya* gourd of beer poured off by the *athuuri a riika*, a gourd of gruel, and a big, half-gourd of cooked *njahĩ* beans. Again the ceremony described above took place, this time between the man who was providing the feast and the man selected for the "communion" from the *athuuri a riika*. This done, the four returned in procession to the headquarters hut again. Now the host of the feast emerged alone with one big *mũcema* (bottle-shaped gourd) of beer, which he took to the *athuuri a thome*, and placed by the senior man among them. The four in procession took beer, gruel, and cooked *njahĩ* beans to the *athuuri α nyũmba* and placed these before them, but no further ceremony of "communion" took place. Likewise they took beer, gruel, and beans to the *athuuri a riika*.

Two *kĩnya* gourds of beer were taken by the host of the feast and placed before the *athuuri a kĩama* (elders of the council), who were uninvited guests, yet received this special beer reserved for them (the *mũrora*). One *kĩnya* gourd also went to the *andũ a kũrira ngi* (the people to drive away the flies). Now the host and two assistants who had been chosen to help him distributed drinking horns (for the men) and drinking gourd cups (for the women), group by group in the order of their seniority. These assistants had to abstain from drinking during the feast, but would have some special beer provided later. They were in charge of the horns and drinking gourds and might not

get drunk or fuddled, for most of these horns and gourds had been borrowed and would all have to be noted carefully and later returned to their owners.

Now at last the host beckoned to the *athuuri a gũtonya nyũmba*, who been patiently waiting in the background. They joined the host and the adviser and together they entered the headquarters hut. The *athuuri a gũtonya nyũmba* were given seats on the side by the woman's bedroom (*ũrĩrĩ*), while the host and his adviser sat by the girls' bedroom (*kĩrĩrĩ*), and, thus seated, they proceeded to drink beer together. As (p.598) soon as they started, each of the groups in the courtyard also set to drinking, under the care and supervision of the two who had been appointed attendants to help with the drinking vessels. These attendants kept a watchful eye on the proceedings, and, as soon as the *athuuri a nyũmba* had finished their beer, summoned the host and his wife to come out and receive from them a little beer left at the bottom of the gourd that had been used for the "communion" feast, along with a little gruel and a few *njahĩ* beans, all of which the *athuuri a nyũmba* had been careful not to finish off. The host and his wife accepted these formally and took them back to the headquarters hut, where they placed them on the woman's bed to be eaten by themselves as a form of ritual thanksgiving after every guest had departed. Similarly, when the *athuuri a riika* were ready, the same procedure was followed with them.

However, when the attendants saw that the *athuuri a thome* had finished their beer in the *mũcema* gourd, the host was summoned alone, and he went out and took them one big hornful from the beer that was being consumed in the hut. He handed this to them and they each drank in turn from the horn. This hornful of beer was called *rũhĩa rũa gũkũũra mũcema* (the horn to redeem the *mũcema*).

When all the other guests had finished drinking their portion of the beer, the host was again summoned by the attendants, and he gave a present of a small gourd of beer to each of the men who had contributed to the feast. These men then proceeded to collect round them their personal friends, who went off with them to drink it together at home. The whole party, in fact, now broke up into a number of subsidiary parties, and the guests departed leaving only the host and his adviser behind. The attendants were also given beer for themselves before they, too, departed with the adviser. That night there was no further ceremony, but on the following night the host and his wife had to have ceremonial sexual intercourse twice.

The Sacrifice of Mbũri ya Gũtinia Ngoro (*A Goat for the Cutting of the Heart*)

After the *mwaro* feast described above was over, and the man had received the formal consent of the family or sub-clan and of the ruling generation to proceed with his plans, he arranged for the sacrifice of the *mbũri ya gũtinia ngoro*. This could not take place until the moon that saw the *mwaro* feast had waned, and a new moon had appeared.

In preparation for this sacrifice, the man who was planning to have (p.599) initiation in his own homestead went once more to a seer, taking with him sticks representing various senior elders whom he would like to have as his advisers during the course of the initiation proceedings. He then asked the seer to divine which two sticks were the most propitious. The two men selected from those represented by the sticks were the men whom he then invited to become his advisers. The duties of the advisers at initiations were to advise and help the man at **whose** home the initiation was taking place in all matters of procedure and detail. Of the two (both of whom had to have qualified as *aruithia* themselves, that is, people who had had such a ceremony in their homes), one was to be the adviser-in-chief, and one his assistant to check his advice and make sure he forgot nothing.

Having had his two advisers chosen by the seer, the man proceeded to fix a day for the ceremony of *gũtinia ngoro* (cutting the heart), at which the advisers would be formally appointed and made known to the other elders of the district. The day for this was fixed and the man took a very big, fat he-goat to the rendezvous, which had to be in the bush behind the homestead (*nyunjurĩ ya mũciĩ*). There he was joined by the two selected advisers and by representatives of the local council elders who had been invited to come as witnesses and share the meat.

The goat was slaughtered by these council elders in the presence of the man and his advisers. It was then cut up, and the sacrum with the lumbar and caudal vertebrae attached (*rũcuthĩ*) and one pelvic bone with part of the leg meat attached, (*rũhonge*) were set on one side with the skin. These were for the advisers to take away with them. A foreleg (*guoko*), one half-saddle joint (*ikengeto*), part of the intestines (*mara*), the fourth chamber of the stomach (*ngerima*), and one pelvic bone with part of the leg meat attached (*rũhonge*) were put into a big half-gourd and sent to the homestead of the man who had provided the goat. This meat had to be eaten by him, his wives, and his own family later in the day.

Then the rest of the meat, including the lungs and the heart in one piece, was roasted, and all except the last named joint were shared by everyone present. Then all junior council elders who had never qualified *aruithia* were sent away, and the final ceremony took place as follows.

The senior adviser took the roasted heart and lungs wrapped in *maturanguru* leaves, and held the joint in both hands. He then leaned forward so that the man who was going to hold the initiation ceremonies might place both his hands over the adviser's hands. Thus holding the joint together, the adviser said, "*Wanyu wakinĩ*" (Your true friend and comrade, see glossary), and the man answered with the same words. They did twice. Then the adviser said, "*Wanyua mong'o*" (special p600 greeting, see glossary), and the man replied in the same way, and this too, they repeated a second time. Now with the joint still held by both of them, the adviser bit off a piece of the lung and spat it out as an offering to the spirits. He then took a second bite and swallowed it This done, the other man, the one who was to be the initiation host, did likewise, after which the adviser pulled away part of the joint leaving the heart and part of the lungs in the other's hands. The adviser then uttered the following blessings: "*Ũroendwo nĩ irua*" (May you be favoured by the initiation ceremonies), and, "*Ũroendwo nĩ maambura*" (may you be favoured by the ceremonial sex acts). The advisers had now entered into formal contact with the man and would assist and advise him at the initiation proceedings, and in a few days' time he would brew beer and send for them to come and drink it. This was *ya gũikũrũkia nyama* (to wash down the meat). When they came, the advisers brought with them a black ceremonial *mũngirima* staff and a bunch of *maturanguru* leaves, both of which they blessed with the beer and handed over to the man. These were his further insignia of office for the duration of the initiation proceedings. Each adviser had a similar insignia. Whenever any of the three got up off their ccremonial stools during the ceremonies, they had to leave their *maturanguru* leaves on the stools as a sign that no one else might sit on them and so defile them.

The Sacrifice of the Mbũri ya Gĩthaka (*A Goat for the Estate*)

After the *mbũri ya gũtinia ngoro* had been slaughtered and that ceremony completed, a man who had never before held an initiation in his own homestead had to sacrifice the *mbũri ya gĩthaka* in order to obtain the blessing of God and the ancestral spirits upon his project. The animal for this sacrifice was a young ram, and the man and his two or three senior wives and one or two elders who had performed this ceremony in the past took this ram into the bush and slaughtered it at the

foot of a *mũthakwa* tree. When they went off, the man had to see that no doors of any huts in his homestead were closed, and his wives had to take with them some finger millet grain, some sweet potatoes, a small amount of every kind of grain or beans that had spilled on the ground under the granaries, a stick of sugar-cane, and a gourd of beer.

The animal having been suffocated, the owner pierced its heart and let all the blood pour out on the ground, at the same time offering prayers to God and the ancestral spirits, to bless the forthcoming initiation ceremonies. Then the meat was cut up and a small proportion (p.601) was roasted, the rest being covered up with leaves. The roasted meat was eaten and a little of the beer was drunk, after which the rest was poured out to God and the spirits. The sugar-cane, cereals, potatoes, were then also offered to God and the spirits, and the party went away leaving all of these things and most of the meat—wrapped in the skin—for God and the ancestral spirits to prepare for themselves. The full details of this sacrifice are given in Chapter 25. This ceremony and sacrifice might take place any time between the day of the slaughter of the *mbũri ya gũtinia ngoro* and the third day before the actual initiation ceremonies started.

Arrangements for a Man who was not a Member of the Ruling Generation to have Initiation Ceremonies Centred on his own Homestead

If a man who was not a member of the ruling age-group had had children initiated at another homestead, and now wished to have initiation ceremonies take place in his own homestead and so become a *mũruithia*, he could do so by following the same procedure as that already set out for a member of the ruling generation. Before he started that set of ceremonies, however, he had to pay a fee of one ox to the ruling generation, for holding an initiation in one's own homestead was a privilege which, by law and custom, only members of the ruling generation might enjoy. This ox was called *ndegwa ya kwambatĩra* (the ox for moving up), and by paying his fee he moved up into the generation older than his own in respect of this particular privilege. He did not, however, become entitled by this means to any of the other rights and privileges of the ruling generation, and had to wait for them until his whole generation "moved up" at the time of the next *ituĩka* ceremonies. A man who could not provide an ox might substitute two he-goats, but regardless of which form his payment took, he had to add to it one fat ram, which was called *ya kũhoria ndegwa* (to cool the ox).

The slaughter of this ox and ram, or of the two he-goats and the ram, was not a sacrifice, but simply a fee to the elders of the ruling generation in place of the fee of one *mbũri ya mũkuha*, which a man who was not a member of the ruling generation had to pay to the latter if he wanted to have a child initiated in another person's home.

The ox or the two he-goats were slaughtered in the bush and the meat was eaten by the elders of the ruling generation who were in (p.602) that territorial area, but they might, and usually did, invite some members of the next generation to share the meat. The senior members of the ruling generation present at the time received, in order of precedence, the hide of the ox, the head, and to each of two men one *rũguatani* (meat on the inner side of a back leg). The man who received the head was also given part of the stomach and one thigh (*kĩero*), and the man who received the hide received the other half of the stomach and the other thigh. The man who provided the ox was given back one foreleg (*guoko*), eight ribs (*mbaru*), part of the intestines (*mara*), part of the liver (*ini*), and part of the first chamber of the stomach (*ihu ria maĩ*).

After the ox had been killed and eaten, the ram was slaughtered, and of this, the owner was given back one foreleg (*guoko*), one half, saddle joint (*ikengeto*), the first three ribs of one side plus part

of the sternum (*kĩĩga*), and some of the intestines (*mara*). The head of the ram, and the sacrum with the lumbar and caudal vertebrae attached (*rũcuthĩ*) were given to two senior members of the ruling generation. Having paid the fee of the ox and the ram to the ruling generation, the man might now proceed to arrange for initiation to take place at his homestead in accordance with the customs and procedure already described. In one thing, however, the procedure differed slightly. At the *mwaro* feast, in addition to a group consisting of men of the ruling generation (*athuuri a riika*), there would be an extra group consisting of men of the host's generation (the generation next junior), and they, as well as the *athuuri a riika* and others listed, had to be provided with gruel and *njahi* beans in addition to the beer, and had to participate in "ceremonial communion" with him as described, in order to give their approval to the step he was taking in becoming an initiation host (*mũruithia*).

The details of the steps required of a man who wished to become a *mũruithia* will have made it clear why only a small proportion of Kikuyu elders ever tried to become *aruithia*, and most men were content to board their children out for initiation with some man who was already qualified as a *mũruithia*. The time, trouble, and cost involved in qualifying as a *mũruithia* were a great deterrent. Because of this, it sometimes happened that a territorial area with a fairly big population found itself without a *mũruithia*, and then the local elders got together and persuaded one of their number to undertake the task of qualifying, promising him assistance in the way of contributions if he was not rich enough to provide everything himself. By so doing, they avoided having to board their boys and girls out at some distant village, which would have been very inconvenient for them.

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Once a Man had become a Mũruithia

As we have seen, a man who had become a *mũruithia* was entitled to hold initiation ceremonies at his own homestead whenever he had one or more children of his own ready for initiation. If, however, he had only one child ready for initiation in any given year, or two children of the same sex, then he had to arrange with a personal friend to let him temporarily adopt an initiation candidate of the opposite sex. This was because the first pair, boy and girl, in all the rites and ceremonies during the actual initiation and during the following eight days of seclusion and training had to be, nominally, the son and daughter of the man at whose homestead the ceremonies were taking place.

A man who was already a *mũruithia* did not have to perform any of the ceremonies described above again, that is, there was no need for the *mbũri ya gũtinia ngoro* and *mbũri ya gĩthaka* ceremonies, and of course, he did not need to get *icũhĩ* insignia made for himself again. However, if the headquarters of the ceremonies was to be the hut of a wife who had not acted in the capacity of "mother" at an initiation ceremony before, the man had to brew beer and call in an insignia maker to make the special earrings for her, and when she had got them, he had to have ceremonial sexual intercourse with her twice that same night to "complete the sacrifice" and make her fully qualified to be the mother of the initiates.

Boarding Arrangements for the Children and the Final Preparations which preceded an Initiation Ceremony

We must now consider the final stages of the preparation for initiation, Preparations that were all the same no matter which of the above circumstances preceded them. We must look at these final preparations from two points of view: from the aspect of the man who was holding an initiation ceremony in his homestead and having other people's children boarding with him there, and from

the point of view of those who sent their children to live and board with a *mũruithia* during the ceremonies.

Once preparations were well in hand, the man at whose homestead (p.604) the initiation ceremonies were to take place, prepared some honey beer so that he might call a meeting to fix the day for the initiation ceremonies to start.

Having got the beer ready, the man sent messages asking the follow, ing people to come: both advisers, the fathers and guardians of every boy or girl who was going to board with him for the ceremony, and usually, the medicine-man who would be in charge of the magical side of the initiation ceremonies. When they were all assembled, he told them that he had brewed *ũũkĩ wa kũraarĩria irua* (honey beer for fixing the day of initiation). Before the beer was produced for the guests a discussion took place, and various parents of children who were going to be initiated there could raise objections to the days suggested until at last a more or less unanimous agreement was reached and the advisers could fix a definite day for the *matuumo*, which would open the proceedings. The advisers also took this opportunity to question the man who would be host at the ceremonies as to whether he had got ready all the necessary things, such as a razor (*rũenji*), small knife (*kahiũ*), the iron earrings (*ngunju*), etc. If he had not, they reminded him what he would need, and if he was a man who was becoming a *mũruithia* for the first time, they advised and warned him of the nature of the duties. Among other things, they told him that from the day of the *ũũkĩ wa kũraarĩria irua* until all the ceremonies were over, he had to take care not to go on any journey, and on no account to sleep anywhere but at his own home. In fixing the day for the ceremonies to start, great care had to be taken to take into account the menstrual periods of the woman round whose hut the ceremonies were to be centred. It was of vital importance that she should not have a menstrual period during the nine days that comprised the period of initiation proper, and the period of seclusion and training.

The advisers had another duty to perform on this occasion of *ũũkĩ wa kũraarĩria irua*, and that was to warn all those who were going to send their children to be circumcised there of the things that they might and might not do. In particular they urged them to make sure that no child who had not been born again was brought for initiation. They also told them what fees they were to bring between this day and the day when the initiation had been fixed to start.

A man who had qualified as a *mũruithia* and who held an initiation at his own homestead had to sacrifice a ram or a he-goat in his courtyard on the third day before the actual initiation started, in the presence of his advisers. This was called *mbũri ya kũgũra irua* (the animal for purchasing the initiation ceremonies). It was a sacrificc to God and to the ancestral spirits to ask their blessing upon the forthcoming ceremonies (p.605). When this animal was slaughtered, part of its blood was allowed to flow into the ground as an offering to the ancestors, and a prayer was made to them. Then when all the joints had been separated out in accordance with custom, and before any were roasted, a small piece from every right-hand joint was put in one pile, and a small piece from every left-hand joint in another, while a small piece from each portion essentially for women, such as the fourth chamber of the stomach (*ngerima*), was added to the left-hand pile, and a small piece from men's joints such as the sacrum with the lumbar and caudal vertebrae attached (*rũcuthĩ*) was added to the right-hand pile. These piles were then covered over with *mũthakwa* leaves. The rest of the meat had to be roasted and consumed by the family and the advisers before nightfall. After dark, the two remaining piles of meat were uncovered and all the sticks of the roasting platform were put between them. The head of the family then called on God and the spirits to accept this offering of meat jointly. One pile was for the deceased elders, who were asked to give some to the

deceased warriors of the family. The other was for the deceased women, who were asked to give some to the deceased children of the family. Next morning, very early indeed, the head of the family completed the offering by pouring out beer for the spirits in the courtyard.

As far as the parents of the children who were to be initiated at this ceremony were concerned, the following were the essential preliminary arrangements that they had to make. As soon as they knew in which homesteads the initiation ceremonies would be staged that year, the parents who had children whom they wished to have initiated had to proceed to make arrangements for their boarding out (*hithia*) in one or another of them. *Kũhithia* is a word we have already noted in connection with animal husbandry and it connotes the placing of one's property in someone else's care and charge. Used in connection with initiation, it meant that a man placed his son or daughter in the charge a *mũruithia* during the nine days of the actual initiation ceremonies and seclusion. For that period the *mũruithia* and his wife would be *in loco parentis* to the children in their care, and were, in fact, spoken of as "father and mother" of the initiates.

Preliminary negotiations were always made well in advance, and the day of the *ũũkĩ wa kũraarĩria irua*, as we have seen above, the parents were summoned to discuss a date for the opening of the ceremonies. A date having been fixed, they then became liable for the boarding fees, which consisted of either a *kĩhembe* (small barrel) of honey or a *mbũri* (goat or sheep). In making the preliminary negotiations mentioned above, every parent who wanted to *hithia* a child, had to (p.606) invite the *mũruithia* concerned to a small beer drink at which the matter was discussed before witnesses.

Two days before the day fixed for the *matuumo*, which was the opening ceremony of the initiation proper, every father or guardian of a boy or girl who was going to be boarded out in this way had to sacrifice a ram in his own homestead as a family sacrifice to ask the family ancestral spirits to bless the child that was to be initiated. If a man had two children who were going to be placed out in this way together he still killed just one ram, and this ram for the ancestral spirits was called *mbũri ya kũhoya irua* (a ram to ask for an initiation ceremony) The details of its slaughter were exactly the same as those of the *mbũri ya kũgũra irua* that a *mũruithia* who had previously held other initiations had to sacrifice. The only difference was in the prayers offered. The *mũruithia*, at his sacrifice, had prayed not only for his own children, but for the whole ceremony that was to take place in his homestead] while the person who was merely sending a child to someone else's homestead was only anxious to have a blessing on his own child or children at this important time of their lives.

On the day that each father of an initiation candidate sacrificed the *mbũri ya kũhoya irua*, and as soon as he had done so, the mother proceeded to arrange the important ceremony of *kũgeria mbarĩki* (to test the castor oil). Castor oil would be needed for a number of purposes during the ensuing weeks, but before any of this ceremonial castor oil could be prepared by the mother of the initiation candidate, she had to invite a woman from another village to come and bring with her a young girl who had been through the rebirth ceremony, but who was not yet old enough for initiation. This girl had to crush a small quantity of castor oil berries, put them in a pot on the fire, and generally participate in the preparation of the first brew of castor oil. This castor oil was then put into a small, special, new oil gourd, or (if the candidate for initiation for whom the oil was being prepared was a girl) into two of these special gourds. This oil would be used for anointing the candidate when he or she returned home after the period of seclusion. (If it was a girl, she took the second oil gourd with her to the initiation lodge).

Early on the morning of the day following the slaughter of the *mbũri ya kũhoya irua*, an offering of beer was made to the spirits, and then the skin of the ram was pegged out. The only other preparations for initiation that we have not mentioned were the appointing of sponsors for the candidates, and the collection of ornaments and other things that each candidate would need.

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Sponsors

The father of every candidate had to arrange for a warrior to act as his son's *mũtiiri* (sponsor or supporter). The warrior's duties consisted primarily of supporting the boy during the actual operation of circumcision, but he had other duties as well which will be discussed in the sections dealing with the actual initiation and the period of seclusion.

Girl candidates each required not one, but two sponsors (*atiiri*), who could not be unmarried girls but rather had to be newly married women who had not yet had babies (*ahiki*).

The ornaments required by each boy for the actual initiation, including the ceremonies of the previous day (*matuumo*), were as follows: a *gĩtukũ* (ostrich feather head-dress), *maruku* (anklets of white colobus fur), *mĩrumbo* (collars of iron wire with thinner wire wrapped round it and tiny bells and bits of chain in front), a *mũthanga wa itemo* (a leg ornament of wire and leather), and a *mũgathi wa guoko* (a bead bracelet). These were obtained for him by his sponsor. He had in addition, of course, his *thira* belt (made of strings, grass stems, and wild banana seeds on a leather base), his *nguurua* necklets (withies of special plants), his *ndorothi* staff (decorated with white colobus fur), and his club, called *igogo* or *kĩgethi*, all of which he had been using in the *mũũmbũro* (the later pre-initiation dances). The parents of the boy had to prepare a tanned leather cloak (*nguoya maribĩ*) which he would don as soon as he had been circumcised.

For the girl candidates, their unmarried but initiated sisters and cousins collected the following items which they would need for the ceremonies of the day prior to initiation (*matuumo*): tiny leg rattles (*njingiri*), a decorated pubic apron (*gĩcoco*), one leather belt decorated with cowrie shells for the waist (*mũtotia wa itina*), two similar belts for the chest, two big bundles of bead necklaces, a bead belt, strings of beads made into a waist belt (*ciũma cia itina*), two necklaces made from gourd tops (*mĩmbũthũ*), a disc made either from sea shell or a piece of ostrich egg shell (*ikenye*), two collars of iron wire wrapped round with thinner wire and with tiny bells and a bit of chain in front (*mirumbo*), a bead head-dress (*ciũma cia mũtwe* or *gĩtihio*), some leather armlets decorated with beads (*ngaguana*), and a necklace made from the sweet-smelling roots of *kĩrago*. The parents also had to provide a new tanned leather cloak (*nguo ya maribĩ*) to be put on immediately after the operation.

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The Actual Initiation and the Operation according to Kikuyu Guild Rites

The actual initiation ceremonies may be regarded as commencing on the day of the *matuumo* dancing and other ceremonies, for this was the day upon which all the candidates assembled together for the first time at the homestead of the *mũruithia*. It was also the day upon which the medicine-man set up the "altar", magically purified the homestead, and set up charms to protect it and its inhabitants from all baneful influences and evil.

The actual initiation may be said to have ended on the following day in the late afternoon, when the operation on every child had been completed, certain other ceremonies were over, the friends and relatives of the initiates had departed, and the initiates were left in the care of the *mũruithia*

for the period of seclusion and training. We must now, therefore, examine in detail the events and ceremonies of these two days, first of all the ceremonies in which the medicine-man was involved.

The Magical Protection of the Homestead

On the evening before the day of the *matuumo*, the medicine-man who had been selected for the task of protecting the homestead usually came to sleep there. First, before dusk, he walked round the outside of the fence which enclosed the homestead, carrying his bag of magic powders and his other paraphernalia. This encircled (*thiũrũra*) the homestead to prevent any evil from entering it that evening and night. Even if he lived nearby and was therefore not intending to sleep at the *mũruithia'*s home he had to be there in the evening to *thiũrũra* the place. Likewise, the advisers, if their homes were far away, came *and* slept in the *mũruithia's* hut becausc the first of the ceremonies to be performed on the next day had to take place at dawn. The medicineman and the advisers had therefore to be on the spot and close at hand.

Before sunrise on the morning of the *matuumo*, the *mũruithia* roused the advisers and the medicine-man, and in the darkness they set off for the *mũgumo* or wild fig tree that had been selected for the ceremonial picking of fig leaves, which was part of the *matuumo* proceedings. This *mũgumo* tree could not be one that was used for sacrifices in connection with religious observances, but might be any other *mũgumo* that (p.609) opened to be reasonably near the *mũruithia's* homestead. The party took with them some beer, and the medicine-man took his bag of magic powders. At dawn he solemnly walked round the tree carrying his bag, and so encircled (*thiũrũra*) it. He then dug a small hole at the foot of the tree and into this put two kinds of magic powder, *ũũmũ* and *ikũnja* (also called *njerũ*). Then the *mũruithia* and the advisers sprayed beer over the stem of the tree, at the same time uttering a prayer to God to bless the ceremonies at the tree and to prevent any bloodshed; accidental or otherwise, from taking place there while the ceremonies were proceeding. They then returned to the homestead in order that the medicine-man might set to work to protect the homestead from all evil that might otherwise mar the initiation ceremonies, and in order that he might set up the magic "table" from which each candidate was to receive ceremonial food later in the day.

On arriving back at the homestead, the medicine-man asked for the small saddle quern from the woman whose hut was to be the headquarters of the whole initiation proceedings. He also had brought to him: two sticks of sugar-cane which had been pulled up by the roots and not cut, and on which all the leaves had been left; two forked sticks or poles of *mũthakwa* wood; a bunch of *mahoroha* leaves; some roots of the *mũriĩra* creeper; two long *mũrigono* saplings; and dry leaf (*iitharara*) of the *mũnjũũ* species of banana. Taking the saddle quern first, he turned it upside down and on its reverse side—not that used for grinding corn—he carefully traced out three concentric rings (*mĩcoro*) with *ira*, *njerũ*, and *ũũmũ* powders, each mixed with a little castor oil to make them into a kind of paint. The outside circle was made with *njerũ* (also called *ikũnja*) the middle circle with *ira*, and the inner circle with *ũũmũ*. In the centre of these concentric rings a space about 6in. in diameter was left. It was in this space that the ceremonial meal of thick porridge (*ngima*) would be mixed for the candidates to eat. Having thus marked the saddle quern, the medicine-man temporarily left it and turned his attention to other things. Each article the list given above was rubbed over with a mixture of the same three powders together with castor oil. This act made them pure, and rendered them capable of annulling all evil that passed them.

Having thus magically treated all these objects, he took them to the entrance of the homestead and proceeded to construct from them a gateway through which every person who came into the

homestead had to pass, so that if anyone who entered had, unwittingly, any evil influence attached to him or her, the evil would be destroyed. To erect this gateway, he placed the two sticks of sugar-cane together with the leafy ends overlapping and bound them with the *mũriĩra* roots so (p.610) as to make them a single "pole". Next he dug a hole on either side of the entrance to the homestead, and put into them a little of each of the powders, *ira*, *njerũ*, and *ũũmũ*, after which he set the two *mũthakwa* forked sticks into the holes as the side posts of the magical gateway he was preparing. This done, he fastened the bunch of *mahoroha* leaves to the middle of the sugar-cane "post" with *mũriĩra* roots; then he hoisted this post up and rested either end on the forked sticks of the *mũthakwa* He now had two sides and a top for his magical entrance, and all that remained to be made was a bottom. For this he bound together the two *mũrigono* saplings with *mũriĩra* roots. He then set them on the ground so that they extended from the base of one *mũthakwa* post to the other, so completing the square gateway through which every person coming to the homestead would have to pass and so be purified.

Then he took the dry leaf of the *mũnjũũ* banana to the homestead entrance as well, and hung it up on a tree, so that people coming in might pass under it and be influenced by it to be peaceful. Having thus prepared the entrance to the homestead in readiness for the arrival of people coming for the ceremony, the medicine-man returned to the saddle quern which he had marked with the concentric rings and went to work to "set it up" in the correct position and manner so that it might serve as a table for the ceremonial meal.

He first dug a shallow hole a little larger in area than the saddle quern itself, by the right-hand side of the door of the headquarters hut. In the centre of this shallow hole he dug a small hole about 6in. in diameter and 12 or 14in. deep. Into this hole he inserted a very special charm (*kĩoho*) which was designed to prevent any possible evil or misfortune befalling the homestead during the ceremonies. This charm was made as follows.

A *kĩhĩnga* plant was taken up, roots and all, and its roots split so that *ũũmũ*, *njerũ* and *ira* powder could be inserted into them. This *kĩhĩnga* was then tied up in a wild banana leaf frond, *mũriĩra* roots being used for the binding. Then the old, broken shaft of an axe that had the hole for hafting in it was added to the bundle, and the whole bundle put into a small string bag. This string bag was then further bound round tightly with *mũriĩra* roots, and was inserted into the bottom of the hole. This done, the saddle quern was put into position in the depression dug for it, so that it covered up the hole in which the charm had been hidden. The side with the concentric magic rings was, of course, facing upwards. Once the stone was in position, the medicineman took four short *mũthakwa* posts, three plain and one with a forked end. After rubbing each one over with some of the three magic powders mixed with castor oil, he set them up north, south, east, and west of (p.611) the stone. The one with the forked end was used as a hook on which to hang up the special gourd which contained the ceremonial honey beer (*ũũkĩ wa mũrũngũ*).

Having set the saddle quern in position, the medicine-man then took another *kĩhĩnga* plant, put magic powders into its roots, bound it round with *mũriĩra*, and fastened it to the left ankle of the woman whose hut was to be the headquarters of the ceremony. She was now the "mother" of the ceremonies, and in fact, the most important person of all those connected with them, as we shall see. This charm was to prevent her menstruating during the period of the ceremonies.

While the medicine-man was engaged in all these preparations, the advisers were also busy. First of all, they demanded of the *mũruithia* that he bring out for their inspection all the things that they

had told him to get ready for the occasion. They checked them over, and if anything was missing or not quite correct, the matter had to be rectified at once. These things were:

1. *Kahiũ*. A small, new knife which the advisers immediately washed and sharpened. This was the knife for the sacrifice of the goat.

2. *Mũkuha*. A small, new awl which the advisers would first use to sew a handle on to the *gĩtete kĩa mũrũngũ*, the bottle gourd to be used for the ceremonial beer, and which would later be used in the ceremony of *kuuna matũ*.

3. *Gĩtete*. A new bottle gourd for the sacred beer which was to be hung up by the magic table on the forked *mũthakwa* stick. The advisers immediately set to work to sew on to it a leather handle and stopper.

4. *Rũenji*. A new razor which was to be used at the ceremonial shaving of the initiates' heads. This the advisers sharpened.

5. *Kiuga*. A big, new half-gourd.

6. *Ndahi*. A new gourd drinking cup.

7. *Rũhĩa rũa maĩga*. A new drinking horn (a pure horn, free from any ceremonial uncleanness), made from the horn of an ox that had been killed, and not one that died a natural death.

8. *Ndua*. A big, new gourd of the type used for brewing beer. This was for brewing the ceremonial beer, called *ũũkĩ wa mũrũngũ*.

9. *Mĩratina*. Some split loofah fruits as used for fermenting beer. These were not new, but were the ones normally used in the homestead.

10. *Mondo*. A new leather bag to which the advisers proceeded to sew a handle.

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11. *Mũkwa*. A leather strap made from the hide of an ox which the advisers made into handles for the bottle gourd (*gĩtete*) and the leather bag (*mondo*).

12. *Ngunju*. The iron earrings that would be used for candidates. These, if the man had been a *mũruithia* before, need not be new, but could be those used on previous occasions.

13. *Ira*. A quantity of white magic powder.

14. *Koiga*. A small, new half-gourd.

15. *Nguo ya maribĩ*. A new tanned leather skin cloak for the *mũruithia* himself to wear, which the advisers now put on him in place of his everyday cloak, and a new one for the woman who was to be "mother" of the ceremonies, which they put on her.

Preparation of Candidates for the Matuumo

On the evening before the *matuumo* (ceremonies of the day before initiation), after the medicine-man had encircled the homestead in the way already described, all the candidates for initiation gathered at the initiation homestead and danced long into the night in the courtyard. They danced the *mũũmbũro* for the last time, and this ceremony was called *kũraaria mũrũngũ* (to keep watch over the sleeping ceremonial honey beer), as one small *ndua* vessel of honey beer had been put to brew that evening by the *mũruithia*.

In the early hours of the morning the candidates went back to their homes to snatch a few hours of sleep, so that at dawn they could be prepared by their parents for the *matuumo* ceremonies. First of all each candidate had his or her hair shaved off, all except one small tuft over the *lambdoidal suture*. This was done for them by their mothers. The tuft left would be ceremonially shaved off later in the day during the *matuumo* ceremonies. Having been thus shaved, each candidate had his or her neck and chest anointed with red ochre mixed with castor oil, after which all clothing was removed, including even the pubic aprons of the girls, and their relatives proceeded to deck out the candidates in the ornaments which they wore for this occasion and which have been listed earlier.

Each candidate was then escorted by the members of his or her family to the initiation centre for the *matuumo*. The children of the *mũruithia* himself were similarly treated that morning, and then awaited the arrival of the others and went with them to dance in the homestead entrance area.

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The Arrival of the Candidates

While the medicine-man and the advisers were busy with their preparations on the morning of the *matuumo* ceremonies, the candidatesbegan to arrive accompanied by their friends and relatives. As each party arrived, they first had to enter the courtyard of the homestead and so pass through the magic gateway that purified them. Then, after dancing for a few minutes in the courtyard, they went out to the entrance area and started dancing there, and this dancing went on until every candidate had arrived, and until the advisers and the medicine-man had completed all the arrangements inside the courtyard.

The Ceremony of Kuohora Ihĩĩ (*To Untie, or Free, the Uninitiated Boys*)

When all the candidates had assembled and were all dancing by the entrance area, they were taken by their sponsors to the area where a few members of the *mũruithia's* family were preparing some sugar-cane juice for beer, to be used for *njohi ya mũrũngũ* (ceremonial sugar-cane beer), as distinct from *ũũkĩ wa mũrũngũ* (ceremonial honey beer). Each girl candidate was handed one of the pestles and had to pound a little of the sugar-cane ceremonially. Then each boy candidate had to squeeze the juice from some of the pounded pulp. This was in order that every candidate might have a part in the preparation of the *njohi ya mũrũngũ*. When they had done this, they went on dancing in the entrance area until they were summoned into the courtyard for the *ohora* ceremony.

Meanwhile, in the courtyard a goat had been slaughtered, and while it was being roasted, the advisers cut the whole skin into rawhide strips, which they put ready on a winnowing tray. While they were doing this, some other men and women were helping the medicine-man make a large number of anklets of the twisted roots of *mũriĩra* and *kĩhĩnga* combined, and the medicine-man anointed each of these with his three magic powders. When the meat was roasted and the rawhide strips and the anklets were all ready, the candidates were summoned to come into the courtyard.

They entered in single file, first the boys, led by the son of the *mũruithia*, and then the girls, led by his daughter. Once in the courtyard the boys stood in line with the leader, close to the headquarters hut and facing it, and the girls came and stood alongside on the left. Then all the relations and friends thronged into the courtyard to watch (p.614) the proceedings, and took up their positions all round the fence of the courtyard. Now the *mũruithia*, assisted by the advisers, put one rawhide strip on to the right-hand middle finger of each male candidate starting with the son of the *mũruithia*. These rawhide strips were so long that after being slipped over the finger,

the "tail" of the strip was wrapped round the boy's wrist. Meanwhile, the wife of the *mũruithia*, with the help of the wives of the advisers, proceeded to put one of the magic anklets on the left ankle of each female candidate. This was to prevent any one of them from being so unfortunate as to have her first menstrual period during the initiation ceremonies.

When every boy had his rawhide strip, and every girl her anklet the *mũruithia* and the advisers roasted the two forelegs (*moko*) and the two half-saddle joints (*makengeto*) of the goat that had been slaughtered, and gave one foreleg to the boy at the head of the file and one to the boy at the tail end of the file, while the two half-saddle joints were given to the two boys in the middle of the file. The girls had no meat given them and merely watched this performance. Each boy had to tear off two mouthfuls of meat from the joint given to him and pass it to the boy next to him up or down the line as the case might be.

As soon as every boy had had his two bites of meat, all the candidates—boys and girls—were sent out to the entrance to bring in the cane juice for the *njohi ya mũrũngũ*, which had by now been put into two large beer brewing gourds (*ndua*). The boy and the girl who were children of the *mũruithia* picked up and carried these two large vessels and the others fell into line behind them. They all came filing back into the courtyard singing:

Kũngũ njohi ya mũrũngũ	Hail to the ceremonial beer
Nderiragĩria!	That I longed for!
Ndigũconoka.	I am not ashamed.
Gĩtuumbĩ kĩrĩa nderiragĩria!	(I have) the big beer vessel that I longed for!
Rora Rũgũrũ!	Look to the West! (should read North)

These words were taken up by all the spectators and the juice for the beer was brought into the courtyard and deposited by the door of the headquarters hut. As soon as this had been deposited, the medicine-man proceeded to give each candidate in turn some of the *ngima* that was now ready on the "table" he had set up. This *ngima* was thick porridge made from mixed sorghum and finger millet flour that, when cooked, had been given to the medicine-man, who had put it into the space inside the three concentric rings on the saddle quern (p.615) and mixed it there with powdered *ũũmũ*, *ira*, and *njerũ* and some castor oil. He had to stir it with a bit of *mũthakwa* wood held together in the same hand with an iron axe head, of which he used the tang end for stirring· When the *ngima* was mixed and had been set on the table, he used this same axe head to cut off little bits of the mixture to give to each boy and girl in pairs. As soon as the leading boy and girl had been handed their portions and had eaten them (on no account might they let any fall to the ground), they turned outwards and moved away to make room for the next boy and girl to move forward to the "table".

Meanwhile, out in the entrance area, four warriors were roasting some green *mũthĩrĩrĩ* or *mũtika* bananas, and when every boy and girl had had the porridge, the spectators cleared away from the homestead gateway, and the candidates rushed out. As they went through the entrance areas the boys had to seize and take a bite from one of these roasted bananas before rushing helter-skelter in a mad race for the *mũgumo* fig tree for the ceremonial breaking off of fig leaves and branches, which was the next stage of the proceedings.

The Ceremony at the Mũgumo Tree

The chief significance of the ceremony at the *mũgumo* tree was its symbolization of the putting away of boyish things (*gũte ũhĩĩ*—to cast away the state of being an uninitiated boy), in preparation

for the assumption of the responsibilities of manhood. The ceremony chiefly affected the boys, and the girls played the part of spectators.

When the candidates were released from the homestead after the *ohora* ceremony, the boys had to race to the tree through the bush, and each boy was accompanied in the race by his sponsor, who gave him directions as to the whereabouts of the tree selected, for this had been kept secret from the candidates. Great honour was attached to the boy who won this race. He was destined to become one of the leaders of the new initiation age-group in his particular territorial section. Any boy who should, by ill fortune, trip and fall to the ground during the race was thereby rendered ceremonially unclean, and that night when he went to his own home he would have to have a ram slaughtered on his behalf to purify him for the next day's proceedings. Upon arriving at the tree, each boy had first of all to fling his club over the tree, and then throw his *ndorothi* staff through its leafy branches. Should he do either of these things clumsily, with the result that his club or his *ndorothi* staff got stuck up in the tree, it was a very bad omen for his future and he was certain to die young, and would probably (p.616) die a violent death. The young brothers and cousins of the candidates had all been sent to the tree in advance while the *ohora* ceremony was in progress. They waited behind and beyond the tree to pick up the clubs and *ndorothi* staves, which they now appropriated in readiness for the time when it would be their turn to be initiated, but they did not keep the colobus fur emblems that were tied to the upper ends of the staves.

As soon as he had thrown away these symbols of boyhood, each male candidate had to climb into the tree and break off a leafy branch or twig, but he had to take care not to touch the leaves on the main stem of the tree. When they had all climbed down again, one or two of the male sponsors climbed into the tree and broke off a number of small leafy twigs which they handed (not threw) down to the other sponsors waiting below. Meanwhile, the girl candidates, who were on no account allowed to run to the tree, had been escorted to it, each supported by her two sponsors. Having arrived at the tree, the female sponsors proceeded to strip bark from the branches broken down by the boys, and to make some bark string from it. Each male sponsor now took five *mũgumo* leaves, and one of the female sponsors of each girl candidate took four *mũgumo* leaves, and they tied these into bunches using the string made by the other female sponsors.

Meanwhile, each boy candidate had taken off his *thira* belt—another emblem of boyhood—and was flogging the stem of the *mũgumo* tree with it. This was done in order to break off all the wild banana seeds (*ngobo*) and grass stems (*thage*) that had been fastened on to the leather. The belt, minus these things, was then tied on to his waist again, to be finally discarded the next morning. After each boy candidate had put his battered belt back on, his sponsor removed his own sword belt, with its sword and sheath, and fastened it round his charge's waist as a sign of the dawn of warriorhood. He also now presented his charge with a ceremonial staff of *mũthakwa* or *mũkeũ* wood to take the place of the discarded *ndorothi*, and to symbolize a spear.

When all this had been done, each boy and girl candidate was handed a bunch of the *mũgumo* leaves that the sponsors had prepared, and the candidates then formed a procession and marched back to the homestead where the proceedings were centred.

Blessing the Candidates

As soon as the candidates arrived back at the homestead, the *mũruithia* and his advisers proceeded to arrange them in the order of precedence (p.617) of their fathers. The candidates had to remember their positions, for, from this moment until the end of the period of seclusion, whenever they formed into line they had to assume the same order. The son of the *mũruithia* always took

first place in the boys' line, and his daughter first place in the girls' line. The order of the others was determined by the advisers. Having been thus lined up, with the girls' file to the left of that of the boys, the two lines of candidates solemnly proceeded through the courtyard to the door of the headquarters hut. Here the leader stood still, and those following deployed to the right and left respectively until the two files had become a single straight line in front of the hut, with the leading boy and girl in the middle, the other boys to the right, and other girls to the left.

At this point the *mũruithia*, with his wife, and the senior adviser, with his wife, came out of the headquarters hut, the two men bringing the *ira* powder which had been kept in readiness for this ceremony. Starting with the two leading candidates, they worked right and left respectively, putting *ira* on each candidate. As they approached each candidate they first dipped their right thumb into the *ira* which was in the palm of the left hand, and presented the thumb for the candidate to lick. Then, if the candidate was a boy, he had *ira* rubbed on to the bridge of his nose and on to his forehead, while the girls had *ira* rubbed on to their temples and ankles.

When all the candidates had been thus anointed with *ira*, the *mũruithia*, the adviser, and their two wives took some of the honey beer brewed as *ũũkĩ wa mũrũngũ* (ceremonial honey beer) the night before. The *mũruithia* filled the special new drinking horn and the new drinking gourd, and handed the drinking gourd to his wife, who was the "mother" of the ceremonies, while retaining the horn himself. They each now took a mouthful of this ceremonial beer, and, retaining their mouthfuls, passed the drinking vessels to the adviser and his wife respectively, who did likewise. The women then stood a little apart in front of the girl candidates and the men in front of the boys, and at a signal from the *mũruithia*, they sprayed the candidates with the beer that was in their mouths. Then they filled up the vessels again, changed places so that the men were in front of the girls and the women in front of the boys, and again sprayed them. This spraying with ceremonial beer was the most solemn form of blessing that it was possible to give.

As soon as this was over all the candidates took up the following song, which they had been taught in readiness for the ceremony, and which they were accompanied in singing by all the male and female sponsors:

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Ndĩgũtiihĩrũo rĩrĩa rĩa njũkĩ	I have been sprayed (or blessed) with the product of the bees
Nderiragĩria,	That I longed for,
Ngĩhakwo ira,	And had *ira* powder rubbed on to me,
Wa Kĩgumo akahakwo mũhu!	As for the son of Kĩgumo, he has had ashes rubbed on him!
Rora Ithũĩro!	Look to the West
Mũrũmeguo Riũa	Your husband the Sun
Rĩrĩgũthũa.	Has just set.
Kwaroka gũkĩa wĩrathanĩre.	When the day breaks tomorrow morning, the responsibility will all be yours.
Itĩri rĩatemwo,	When the field of assembly is prepared,
Ndirĩ wa nyũkwa!	I am not a child of your mother!
Hũ!	*Hũ!*

While they were singing this song, one or two of the sponsors came and took the bunches of *mũgumo* leaves from the candidates in the order of their seniority. First they took those of the boys and placed them on the roof of the headquarters hut in the exact order of precedence, so that next day each boy's sponsor could be given back the one belonging to his charge. Then they took the girls' bunches and arranged these in a line below the row of boys' leaves. Both the lines had to start over the doorway of the hut and go to the right towards the girls' bedroom.

All the candidates then went back to their own homes, each candidate escorted by his or her sponsors, relatives, and friends, and as they went they continued to sing the song quoted above. Once home, each candidate was given a meal of *njahĩ* beans, pigeon peas, and some bulrush millet gruel. The whole night was then spent in dancing and singing, and no one slept.

The Morning of the Actual Operation

Early next morning, before the sun rose, the father and mother of each candidate, together with one or two of the senior members of the homestead, proceeded to bless their son or daughter before sending him or her off for the operation. This blessing was carried out as follows· A small bunch of *mũthakwa* leaves and another of *mũkenia* had been picked and carefully put aside, after being rubbed over with *ira* powder (p.619) mixed in water. Now the father of the candidate held these bunches of leaves *in* his right hand and the mother held on to the father's left wrist so as to associate herself with him. The others present held on to their clothing. The mother and father each took a mouthful of sugarcane beer and spat it out over the bunch of leaves. Then they struck the candidates' faces with the bunches of leaves, at the same time *blessing* them and exhorting them to show no signs of fear at the time of the operation, after which the bunches of leaves were placed on the roof of the parents' hut. These leaves had now absorbed all the candidates' fear of the operation, so the candidates would not bring shame to their families.

Now the boy candidates had all their ornaments taken off save the remains of the *thira* belt, the waist band of *ngũnyi* seeds, and the *nguurua* (withy necklets). Then they set off naked for the *mũruithia's* homestead, where all the candidates had to reassemble with their sponsors. The girls were not stripped so completely of their ornaments, but had most of them taken off, and they, too, went to the initiation homestead.

When all the candidates had arrived they were sent off to the nearest stream to bathe under the supervision of some warriors and older girls. At the river the boys and girls separated and proceeded to bathe, the girls downstream of the boys. Each candidate had to sit down in the cold running water, so that his or her genitalia were completely numbed by the cold.

The boys now removed their *thira* belts and let them be carried away by the stream, thus washing away the last vestiges of boyhood. They also took off all the *nguurua* (withy necklets) from their necks save one, so that when they emerged from the water all they had on was a *ngũnyi* bead waist band and one *rũkuurua* (withy necklet). The girls had all the rest of their ornaments removed while they bathed, but when they came out of the water they put on again the two *mĩtotia* (breast belts ornamented with cowrie shells) and the *ciũma cia itina* (belt made of strings of beads). Besides numbing them with cold so that the operation would be less painful, the object of the bath was also to remove all traces of red ochre, *ira*, etc. so that they went to the operation clean and fresh.

As soon as the candidates, male and female, came out of the water, each had to make the sign *thano* with both hands, and retain this sign while walking to the operation field and during the operation itself. This sign consisted of closing the fist with the thumb projecting between the index and middle fingers. It was the sign that kept away the evil eye and other harmful influences, and as they now had no *ira* (p.620) or any other protection it was an essential precaution during this period (This sign also meant five, hence the name *ithano*, five.)

While the candidates had been bathing, their sponsors each collected the bunch of fig leaves belonging to his or her charge and went to the operating site, a grassy patch of ground that had been selected for the purpose, often one of the dancing fields. Here the sponsors and a great

concourse of relatives and friends of the families assembled to await the arrival of the boys and girls from the river. The candidates marched to the field in their fixed order of seniority, and on reaching it divided the boys going to one part of the field and the girls to another.

They were joined by their sponsors and each candidate was made to sit down on the bunch of fig leaves that the sponsors had brought from the roof of the headquarters hut where they had been deposited on the previous evening. The boys sat down in a row facing Mount Kenya, in their order of seniority, and each sponsor took up his position squatting behind the boy he was sponsoring, so as to give him something to lean against. Each boy then proceeded to dig his heels firmly into the ground so that he could press more firmly against his sponsor, and so keep himself firm and rigid. A big body of friends and relatives, male and female, assembled and formed a circle round the boys to watch for any signs of fear on the part of those candidates in whom they were interested. The elders of the council did not watch, even if their own sons were being initiated, and the *mũruithia* and his advisers did not come down for the actual operation but waited for the candidates up at the homestead.

The two operators, a man and a woman who had come to perform the actual operations, were also known as *aruithia* (plural of *mũruithia*), and this title must not be confused with that of the man at whose home the whole initiation was centred. The only task of the operators was to perform the actual operations and treat the wounds.

The Operators

The profession of *mũruithia* in the sense of operator was one which was very limited indeed and was mainly restricted to certain families. The most important of these were the families of Kĩrũ wa Mĩnaĩ, Kĩgurũ wa Ngũna, and Gacengeci. Any person, whether a member of these families or of some other family, who wished to enter the profession, had to become an apprentice to the masters for at least seven years, and he had to pay a fee of 30 ordinary goats and sheep and several stall-fattened animals before he was entitled to start practising (p.621) his own. This rule applied not only to male operators but also to women professionals, the fees for them to become apprentice being paid by their husbands. The profession was a well paying one, because in one season an operator would perhaps perform 400 or 500 operations, and for each one he or she received a fee of a piece of iron or a goatskin from the parent of the candidate. These the operator later sold for things which he or she required, or bartered them for sheep and goats.

The Actual Operation

As soon as the boys were all seated and settled into the correct position, that is, with their faces turned up to the sky, their legs apart, and their bodies pressed hard against their supporters so as to be rigid, the operator advanced with his special knife in his right hand. He seized the senior boy's prepuce with his left hand and inserted his forefinger into the opening of his foreskin, after pulling it forward and stretching it to its limit. He then cut a slit across the hinder portion of the prepuce on the upper surface and at right angles to the penis. Having made this slit, he brought the *glans penis* up through the slit so that it was exposed. The foreskin was not cut off but was left below the *glans penis*, where it remained for the rest of his life.

Having thus "circumcised" the senior boy, he passed to the next one and so on down the fine. As soon as he had finished operating on a candidate, that candidate's sponsor clapped his right hand over his charge's eyes lest he should look down, see the blood flowing, and become afraid. He kept

the boy thus blindfolded until the operator had passed round the line, returned to the starting point, and gone down the line a second time.

Meanwhile, with his left hand the sponsor untied the boy's *ngũnyi* waistband and handed it to one of the boy's younger brothers or cousins who had been waiting behind for this moment. This boy appropriated the *ngũnyi* belt and kept it for the time when he himself would be initiated. When the operator had been down the line once, circumcising each boy quickly, he came back to the senior boy and proceeded to go down to the end of the line a second time, examining the wounds, and if he found that there was a little bit of loose skin projecting over the upper part of the rim of the *glans penis*, he cut it off.

As soon as each boy had been thus examined and his condition passed as being satisfactory, his sponsor took the special new, soft, skin cloak (*nguo ya maribĩ*) which the boy's parents had provided and which he himself had been wearing over his own cloak, and put it on (p.622) his charge. He then helped him to stand up and escorted him to another corner of the field where a fire had been lit for the initiates to sit by and warm themselves for a short time. The boys were now no longer *ihĩĩ* (uninitiated boys) but *irui* (initiates), a title which was theirs until the end of the period of seclusion and training, when they would become novices (*ciumĩri*). Each sponsor, before he took his charge over to the fire, took one of the five fig leaves that the boy had sat on and tied it to the corner of the boy's cloak. The other four were left behind on the field (*itĩri*). There was no fear of anyone touching them or using them to make witchcraft, for anyone who attempted to do so would die.

Meanwhile, in another part of the field, the girls were being operated upon by a female operator. As we have already seen, each girl candidate had not one, but two sponsors. They now took charge of her and got her into the correct position for the operation. First the girl's bunch of fig leaves was put down on the ground, and then the senior sponsor sat down in such a way that these leaves were between her outstretched legs. She then dug her heels into the ground to get a firm grip. The girl candidate was made to sit on her sponsor's legs above the knees and to put her ankles under the knees of her sponsor. She thus had a very firm seat, slightly raised off the ground, the reason for this being that unless she was thus raised the operator could not work properly.

This senior sponsor then put her arms under her charge's armpits and round her chest to hold her tightly, while the second sponsor took up a position behind the first one so as to give support to her back. The girl candidate's hands were still in the *thano* position, to ward off evil, and she held them upwards with her elbows on her knees. Her face was lifted to the sky by tilting her head back so that she would not be able to see what happened to her. When all the girl candidates were in position and ready in a line in their order of seniority and facing Mount Kenya, the female operator came and knelt before the senior girl candidate.

With her left hand she parted the *labia majora* and took hold of the clitoris between the thumb and first finger of her left hand. Pulling it forward as much as she could, she cut off a tiny portion of the skin, using a special sharp razor to do so. The clitoris was called *kang'ũthũ* or sometimes *kang'ura*. Sometimes the operator also excised a little piece of the *labia majora* on either side of the clitoris. As soon as the operator had finished, the sponsor on whom the girl was sitting clapped one hand over her eyes to prevent her seeing the other girls being operated upon. The other sponsor then slipped a new cloak over the girl and (p.623) examined the wound. There was no regular second examination by the operator as there was in the case of the boys, but if the sponsor thought

that there was any need to do so, she could call the operator to come and examine the wound after all the others had been operated upon.

As soon as the blood caused by the operation started to congeal a little, the sponsor wiped it away with her fingers to prevent it from drying over the wound. She then took a small quantity of *mũgumo* bark which she had been chewing in her mouth, and put this over the wound to act in the dual capacity of absorbent and astringent. The girl candidates were helped to their feet and conducted to a second fire which had been lit for them to warm and rest themselves by, and each girl, before she went over to the fire, had one of the fig leaves she had sat over tied to the corner of her new cloak. As soon as the operators had completed their work and while the initiates were resting and warming themselves by the fires, the two operators went up to the initiation homestead to receive their fees, and to receive the special beer that had been brewed for them by the man who had organised the initiation ceremony and summoned them to perform the operations.

Their beer was brought out in two large *ndua* brewing gourds and the operators each took a drinking vessel, sipped a mouthful of their beer, and spat it out over their right shoulders. This was *kwĩrathima ngoro*. They then drank the rest of the beer in the drinking vessel and gave instructions for the rest of the beer in their *ndua* to be poured off. This done, they demanded their fees, and the male parent of every candidate handed over the pig-iron or goat skin that was his fee. The mothers of the candidates handed over the *mehotoro* (consideration for work done), which was an additional special fee consisting of one big half-gourd of castor oil berries and one of bulrush millet corn. Having sampled their beer and received their fees, the operators asked for some the special castor oil which had been made ready and put into two small bottle gourds for this purpose, and they carried these down to the operation field, picking some *mũkengeria* creepers as they went.

The male operator went to the boys' fire, and the female operator to the girls' fire, and they examined the wounds of each initiate in turn. After first cutting a little *mũkengeria* stem into fine slices (like chopped onions) and putting it on the wound as an antiseptic, they anointed the wounds with oil. This also served to purify and *horia* the knife and razor (cool down and ward off evil influences) of the operators. The girl initiates then had soft, cool *magutuĩ* leaves put between their *labia* and over the wounds, in place of the *mũgumo* bark. (p.624) These leaves served the purpose of preventing the *labia* from being drawn together by scar tissue as the wound healed. The female operate· told the girls that they had to renew these leaves at frequent interval until the wounds were healed, as otherwise they would have trouble later in childbirth. This task performed, the operators repaired once more to the homestead to drink their beer, inviting a number of friends to share it with them. They then went home, taking their fees with them.

Building the Initiation Lodge

The lodge which was to be the temporary abode of the initiates for the period of their seclusion and training was called a *gĩthũnũ* (a temporary hut). It was built on to the *kĩrĩrĩ* side of the headquarters hut, i.e. at the side by the girls' bedroom, to represent an extension of that room, for the initiates were, for the time being, the children of the woman who owned the headquarters hut, and as her children, they were supposed to sleep in the children's room. The *gĩthũnũ* was built by the male and female sponsors, but before they started building it, they escorted all the initiates up to the initiation homestead and lit fires for them in the entrance area. Here they left them to rest and to eat such food as had been brought for them by their relatives, while they, the sponsors, built the lodge. The male sponsors went off and cut *mũthakwa* poles, and the women collected large quantities of dry banana leaves (*matharara*). Then, while some of the male sponsors set up the

framework of the *gĩthũnũ*, others went and cut banana stems (*mĩramba*) which would be required for partitioning the floor space of the hut.

The *gĩthũnũ* was always built right up against the headquarters hut, and the statement made by Kabetũ in Chapter 1 that they were put into a *gĩthũnũ* a long way away from the *mũruithia'*s homestead is disputed by every Kikuyu elder I have consulted. (Possibly, in his old age he made a mistake and used *haraya* (far) when he meant *hakuhĩ* (near), or his amanuensis may have made this slip.) The *gĩthũnũ* had walls and a roof of banana leaves and only one entrance, which had two "curtains" made of bunches of dry banana leaves to close it. When the hut had been constructed, the banana stems were laid on the ground to make symbolic partition walls to divide the *gĩthũnũ* into five parts· At the front, near the door, was an area for the fire, on the left in the front part was an area where a few of the female sponsors who were in charge would sleep, and to the left at the back a larger area for the female initiates. The male sponsors were at the front to the right of (p.625) the fire, and the male initiates to the right at the back. All these areas, except the one for the fire, were strewn with dry banana leaves to act as bedding. The preparation of the *gĩthũnũ* took some time, as in addition to the building work, the female sponsors had to collect firewood to be used in the lodge. It was seldom ready, therefore, before the late afternoon, but as it was not required for use until late in the day, this did not matter.

The Slaughter of the Ndũrũme ya Irua (*The Circumcision Ram*)

While the lodge was being constructed and the initiates were resting and eating by the fire out in the entrance area, the *mũruithia* provided a ram for sacrifice which he himself suffocated and pierced with the new knife which had been provided for this special purpose. Then he handed over the task of skinning and cutting up the animal to some of the younger men under the direction of the advisers. The whole of the meat was put on to a winnowing tray and covered over with *mũthakwa* leaves for the time being, and with it was put a piece of skin from the ram's breast, with some of the breast meat attached to it. This piece of skin was to be made into a special rawhide strip which the *mũruithia* had to have put on his finger later in the day by the senior adviser. Some of the undigested stomach contents of the ram were put into the small, new half-gourd (*koiga*) and this was put under the eaves of the headquarters hut until required later. One of the advisers meanwhile got a bit of green banana bark, which he put with the half-gourd of stomach contents to be used for the ceremonial entry of the "mother's" hut by the initiates that evening.

Before the ram was slaughtered, the large *ndua* vessel containing the ceremonial honey beer (*ũũkĩ wa mũrũngũ*) had to be brought out and put in the charge of a specially appointed elder who was called *mũgwati wa mũrũngũ* (the guardian of the ceremonial beer). He had to be a man who had no legal wife of his own, that is, a man such as a serf, who merely had some woman with whom he slept as a physical but not legal wife. From this day until the conclusion of the ceremonies he was in charge of the *gatua ka mũrũngũ* (the small brewing vessel of ceremonial beer), and had a special seat by the saddle quern at the entrance of the headquarters hut. Whenever the sacred honey beer was required, he had to bring it out of the hut, and most of each day he spent sitting on his stool with the beer on his lap.

On this first occasion when it was brought out, he poured off some of the honey beer into the special bottle gourd which had been prepared (p.626) by the advisers and the *mũruithia*. The advisers drank some from the mouth of this bottle gourd, and blessed themselves with it. Then a little of it was put into a horn and the *mũruithia* and his advisers blessed the ram with it before it was slaughtered.

The special stools to be used by the *mũruithia* and his advisers were brought out into the courtyard and they spent most of the day sitting on them, directing operations, and occasionally having a little of the ceremonial honey beer from the bottle gourd which was now hung up on the forked *mũthakwa* post by the saddle quern.

While the *gĩthũnũ* lodge was being built, the ram being slaughtered and the initiates resting, a number of people had been sent off to cut sugar-cane and bring it to the homestead. This was to be crushed next day for the beer required for the following day when the shaving ceremony would take place.

In the middle of the afternoon, when the *gĩthũnũ* was nearly finished, all the friends and relatives of the initiates dispersed to their own homes, and later, at the time when the goats and sheep of the homestead started to come home for the evening, the next series of ceremonies started. These began with the entrance of the initiates into the *gĩthũnũ*, and were the opening ceremonies of the period of seclusion and instruction, which is the subject of our next section.

The Kikuyu Guild Period of Seclusion and Instruction

First Day

In the late afternoon, when everything described in the previous section had been completed, the ceremonial honey beer was taken back into the headquarters hut and the initiates were summoned from the fires where they had been resting, and entered the lodge or *gĩthũnũ*. They lined up in their order of precedence, and entered the lodge in double file, the girls' file being to the left of the boys' file. Once they had entered the *gĩthũnũ*, the essential ceremonies of this first day of seclusion could be started.

First the advisers and *mũruithia* sat down upon their stools by the tray where the meat and the skin had been put. Then the senior adviser took the piece of breast skin with the meat attached to it, and took two bites from the meat. He then leaned forward and put the strip of skin on the right-hand middle finger of the *mũruithia*, and, holding (p.627) the *mũruithia's* hand, put it to his mouth. Now the *mũruithia* took two bites of the meat, and then the two men greeted each other twice. The adviser said first, "*Wanyu wakinĩ*" (Your true friend and comrade), and the *mũruithia* replied with the same words, after which they greeted each other with the other formula, "*Wanyua mong'o*" (special greeting, see glossary). Then the wife of the senior adviser took a piece of raw fat and she and the wife of the *mũruithia* exchanged the greetings, "*Wakĩa wakĩri*" (see glossary) twice over. This done, the meat that was to be roasted was put over a fire in the courtyard, while the joints that were for boiling were taken into the headquarters hut to be put on the fire there. When the meat that was roasting was ready, the *mũruithia* held the roasted breast (*gĩthũri*) in both hands, and presented it to the senior adviser, who put his two hands over the *mũruithia'*s and then put the joint thus held by both of them to his mouth and took two bites. Then the senior adviser took the joint, and the *mũruithia* put both his hands over the adviser's hands, and he took two bites. At the same time they greeted each other with the words "*Wanyu wakinĩ*", twice and "*Wanyua mong'o*", twice. Then the adviser took one foreleg and one half-saddle joint that had been roasted, cut all the meat from these two joints into little pieces, and put them into two half-gourds (ones in general use, not the new one). These half-gourds with the meat were handed to the two wives of the advisers to take to the initiates in the *gĩthũnũ*. They also took with them, on a sharp, pointed stake, a large piece of the *riũa* (the layer of fat and tissue off the back of the sacrum and pelvis).

Upon arriving at the door of the lodge, they addressed the initiates as a whole with the words, "*Wakĩa wakĩri*" (a greeting between young and old, see glossary), and the candidates replied in unison, "*Wakĩa wakĩri*". This formula was repeated twice, after which the piece of fat on the stake was stuck into the ceiling of the lodge to be used for similar greetings whenever anyone came to the lodge. The wives of the advisers then handed one half-gourd of meat to the male and one to the female vitiates, and withdrew.

Before the initiates ate any of this meat they were instructed by the sponsors to perform an act symbolizing their new adult status. The male initiates said to the girls, "*Tũtegere*" (Give us a present), and each of the girls then took a piece of meat and handed it to one or other of the boys, whoever they chose, saying, "*Nĩndagũtegera*" (I give you a present), addressing the boy by name. Then the boys said, "*Tuohere*" (literally, Tie grass for us). This was the formula used in *ũũmbani* ceremonies (see Chapter 18) to indicate which warrior a girl chose as her over.

p.628
There was no question of these initiates in the *gĩthũnũ* being lover· or taking the ceremony seriously, but by acting thus they symbolized the fact that they were now adults and were expected to *ũũmbana* (make love to each other). Hitherto it had been illegal and improper for them to do so. The bits of meat used for this ceremony and presented by the girls to the boys were now put back in the girls' dish, and the boys and girls separated to their own sections of the *gĩthũnũ* to eat the meat.

Only those who were blood relatives of the *mũruithia* actually ate any meat, the others did so symbolically by rubbing a piece on their throats. When the meat had been thus eaten, the six sponsors in the lodge in charge of the initiates (the various sponsors took charge on different days throughout the period of the seclusion, six or eight of them at a time) went out into the courtyard to have some of the meat that was being roasted there, if they wished to do so. Any male sponsor who thought that he might later want to marry one of the female initiates had, however, to abstain, for if he ate any of the meat sacrificed for her he would never be allowed to marry her.

Out in the courtyard the advisers, the *mũruithia*, and others were eating the roasted meats, and when the boiled joints were ready they consumed them also. However, the sacrum with the lumbar and caudal vertebrae attached (*rũcuthĩ*), the ventral sac of the rumen (*mũromo wa ihu*), and the *ngũngũgũ* (skull of the ram minus its lower jaw and tongue) might not be eaten. They were put into the small, new half-gourd which had been provided for this purpose, and were stored in the headquarters hut until the following day. Before any of the boiled joints were eaten by anyone at all, the *mũruithia* had to eat some of the meat of one of the feet. By the time all the meat had been consumed it was dark, and in the early evening, everyone present, including the male advisers, the guardian of the ceremonial honey beer, and the sponsors went into the men's hut, leaving only the *mũruithia* and his wife in her hut and one of the wives of the advisers who was to be "on duty" for the next ceremony.

When the courtyard was empty she summoned the initiates from the *gĩthũnũ* and told them to line up in single file, boy and girl alternating, with the senior boy at the head, followed by the senior girl, and all the others behind in order of precedence. (If there were more of one sex than the other, the supernumeraries were at the end of the line together). As the initiates filed past her, the adviser's wife was "on duty" untied the *mũgumo* leaf that had been attached that morning to the corner of the cloak of each boy and girl. She put these into the small half-gourd in which the stomach contents of the ram (p.629) had been stored, before they were put into the bit of green banana bark

These leaves in the small half-gourd were then put at the head end of the woman's bed in the headquarters hut.

The initiates filed in order into the headquarters hut, where they found that the bit of green banana bark had been placed across the entrance with the stomach contents in it. They had been warned about this and as they came to it each initiate had to dip (*gũcũnĩria*) one foot—right in the case of boys, left for girls—into the stomach contents twice, and then step over it and go on into the hut. Inside the hut the senior boy and senior girl and as many others as would fit, crowded into the girls' bedroom. The others lay down on the floor near to it and in the centre of the hut, but not in the goats' sleeping place, or near the woman's bed. They then all had to pretend to go to sleep and be absolutely silent. When all the initiates had entered the hut, the adviser's wife who was "on duty" for this ceremony closed the hut door, after moving the green banana bark to one side. She remained on guard to see that no one disturbed the occupants of the hut and to wait for the signal that the ceremony about to be performed was completed.

The *mũruithia* climbed into the bedchamber of his wife while she withdrew the wood from the fire so that it would not flame up and light the hut. In the darkness she took off her cloak, hung it up as usual on the peg by her bed, and climbed into bed with her husband. They then had full sexual intercourse, and as soon as this had been achieved the husband cleared his throat (*gũthamara*). This was a signal to the woman on duty outside that the "sacrifice" of sexual intercourse was over. At this point she broke the silence by calling out the question, "*Igongona rĩgũthira?*" (Is the sacrifice over?). This was just in case he should have cleared his throat in the ordinary course of events and not as a signal, or in case one of the initiates should have done so accidentally. The man replied, "Yes", and the woman at once summoned the women of the other huts, who came into the middle of the courtyard and gave forth five loud peals of *ngemi* (ululations). This was the signal to everyone that this ceremony, which was of vital importance to the welfare of all the "children" (i.e. the initiates) of the *mũruithia* and his wife, was completed.

In the event of the *mũruithia* being old and impotent and unable to perform the sex act of ceremonial intercourse required of him, he had to get one or another of the advisers, or else the guardian of the ceremonial honey beer, to act for him. (This was one of the few occasions when a man need not get a member of his own age-group to act in this way for him). While the person chosen was acting for the *mũruithia* (p.630) in this way, he had, temporarily, to wear the rawhide strip which had been put on the *mũruithia's* finger when the ram was sacrificed.

The initiates now came out of the hut in the reverse order from that in which they entered, but a few of the senior initiates stayed and slept in the girls' bedroom (*kĩrĩrĩ*) that night. The others went back to the *gĩthũnũ* which, as we have seen, was regarded as an extension of the *kĩrĩrĩ*.

The advisers, their wives, and the guardian of the ceremonial honey beer then joined the *mũruithia* and his wife in her hut—they had now got out of the bed again and donned their clothes—and before they retired for the night they all drank some of the ceremonial beer to celebrate the end of the first day of the seclusion period.

When the parents of the initiates returned home, after paying the operators' fees on this first day of the seclusion period (it was really only half a day, as the first part of it had been taken up with the actual operations and the building of the lodge), they set to work to cut sugar-cane for beer and to collect and prepare various foods, such as bulrush millet gruel, in readiness for the *mathemba* (presents of food customary after an initiation), which they would have to hand over in two days' time.

It may be noted here that because the initiates were together in the same lodge meant that the male initiates would never be allowed legally to marry any of the girl initiates of that lodge, because they had become as brothers and sisters, since they all had the same initiation mother and initiation father. There was only one exception to this rule. If by any chance, in later life, one of these boys should cause one of the girls to become pregnant, he might be allowed to marry her, provided that the two of them first went through a ceremony called *gũtuithania* (to cut apart). Even if they did undergo this ceremony, however, they would suffer many disadvantages if they married. For instance, if a situation arose in which a man needed to get a member of his own age-group to perform a ceremonial sex act for him, he would find it difficult, for most of the members of his age-group in that district would be people who had a relationship of "initiation brother" to his wife, and who therefore could not act for him.

The Second Day

Soon after dawn, the few initiates who had slept in the girls' bedrooiP in the headquarters hut joined their companions in the *gĩthũnũ*. Then (p.631) friends and relatives arrived with food, which might consist of ripe bananas, sweet potatoes, boiled yams, gruel, pigeon peas, or maize made into *trio*, but the initiates were not in any circumstances to be given sugar-cane, edible arum, maize on the cob, or *njahĩ* beans.

Whenever any person arrived at the door of the *gĩthũnũ* (either with food or to talk to the initiates), one of the candidates had to take the stick with the bit of meat on it from where it was stuck into the ceiling and say to the visitor, "*Wakĩa wakĩri*" (see glossary), to which the visitor had to answer, "*Wakĩa wakĩĩri inyuothe*" (see glossary). This was repeated twice with the initiate holding the meat. Then the visitor took the meat and he or she said, "*Wakĩa wakĩĩri*" twice, and all the initiates replied together, "*Wakĩa wakĩri*". The piece of meat on the stick was then put back into the ceiling until another visitor came.

On these eight days of seclusion, whenever any of the initiates wished to eat food of any sort, it had to be wrapped round with banana bark by one of the sponsors, and then handed to the initiate. Initiates might not touch food with their bare hands. This did not apply to meat, which they might hold in their hands if they first washed them. Meat was not looked upon as food.

As soon as the initiates had had their morning meal they were formed into a single line in the same order of precedence as on the previous day, and they then had to file ceremonially into the headquarters hut and out again in order that they might go to the ceremony of *kũrutwo ũrimũ wa ũhĩ* (to have the foolishness, or ignorance, of boyhood removed) straight from their "mother's" hut. In doing this, the leader entered the porch and turned right, into the hut, and then walked slowly with bent head to the centre of the hut where the hearthstones were. He passed to the left of the hearthstones and on to the entrance of the woman's bedroom, where he turned right and came along by the side of her bedroom, passing first the storeroom and then the girls' bedroom, and so straight out of the hut again into the courtyard. He was followed by the whole file, "follow-my-leader" fashion. On this occasion there was no question of stepping over the green banana bark with stomach contents in it. That was a ceremony reserved for those occasions when they entered the hut to be present at a ceremonial sex act.

As soon as the last candidate had filed out of the headquarters hut, guardian of the ceremonial honey beer brought it out, took his seat by the side of the saddle quern, and proceeded to fill up the ceremonial bottle gourd and hang it on to the forked stick. He had to remain here throughout

the day, giving a little of this beer to the advisers and the *mũruithia* whenever they wanted some for refreshment. The advisers also now ate the meat put away on the previous evening.

p.632
As the initiates filed out into the courtyard again they found all their sponsors, the advisers, and the *mũruithia* waiting for them. The *mũruithia*, the senior adviser, and their wives were sitting on their stools, and in front of them were four small boards (*ihengere*). The initiates came to them four at a time (two boys and two girls), in the order of their seniority, to go through the two ceremonies of *kũrutwo ũrimũ* (to have their foolishness removed), and *gũtonyũo matũ* (to have their ears pierced).

Kũrutwo Ũrimũ and Gũtonyũo Matũ

As the first four senior initiates filed out of the headquarters hut they went to the *mũruithia*, the senior adviser, and their wives, and knelt down before them on boards that had been placed there for them. The senior boy knelt before the *mũruithia*, the senior girl before his wife, the next senior boy before the senior adviser, and the next senior girl before his wife. The men now removed the last remaining *nguurua* (withy necklets) from the boys kneeling before them and placed these on a winnowing tray, while their wives removed from the girls' ankles the anklet of *kĩhĩnga* and *mũriĩra* root that had been put on on the *matuumo* day. This act of removing these necklets and anklets symbolized the removal from each candidate of the foolishness (*ũrimũ*) that was an attribute of childishness. (The rawhide strips that the boys had had put on them on the *matuumo* day had been removed by each boy by himself before he went to bathe in the river prior to the operation). Each necklet and anklet had to be carefully untwisted by the advisers and then broken up into small pieces. Should a piece fall to the ground instead of on to the winnowing tray, a ram had to be sacrificed in atonement.

Then, while the initiates were still kneeling before them, the senior adviser and his wife took the new awl and a piece of root of the *mũcũgũcũgũ* plant, and symbolically pierced the ear-lobes of each candidate by passing these through the existing holes. This symbolized the candidates' new adult status. They would now be entitled to wear proper ornaments in their ears, whereas hitherto all they had worn were stretching plugs. Into both ear-lobes were now put rings of *mũcũgũcũgũ* and *mwarĩki* root and one of the special ceremonial iron rings called *ngunju*·· Should any of these fall to the ground, a ram had to be sacrificed to purify them when they were picked up. When the first four initiates (p.633) had been thus treated they rose from the kneeling position and the boys went to the male sponsors, who were waiting for them, and the girls to the female sponsors, for the next ceremony. Meanwhile, four more initiates knelt down, and so on until all of them had had "their foolishness removed" and their ears "pierced".

The tray with all these bits of *nguurua* and the *mũriĩra* and *kĩhĩnga* anklets was then taken by the "mother" of the ceremonies and put into the storeroom (*thegi*), to remain there until after the eight days of seclusion were over.

During the performance of the above mentioned ceremonies on the second day, the parents of every initiate had to be present to watch the proceedings, and they were provided by the *mũruithia* with beer to drink while they did so. Meanwhile, at their homes, the family of every initiate boarding in the lodge was busy brewing the beer and cooking the food which had to be brought by them on the following day, the third day of the seclusion, when the ceremonial shaving would take place. The members of the *mũruithia*'s family also spent the day brewing beer from the canes cut on the previous afternoon, cooking food, and making gruel for the next day's feast.

The ceremonies described above took the greater part of the morning of the second day, and the afternoon was devoted to resting, for the candidates were still weak from loss of blood sustained at the operation. The sponsors that afternoon examined the wounds of their charges, showed them how to treat them, and generally gave them advice. The female sponsors renewed the *kagutuĩ* leaves between the *labia* of the girl initiates, and the male sponsors put thin pieces of *mũkengeria* stem—the juice of which is antiseptic—down the urethra canals of the boys to clear them of any pus or dried blood that might be causing irritation.

That evening, the initiates retired to the *gĩthũnũ* lodge without first entering the headquarters hut, and here they spent the evening eating, talking, and being given general advice and instruction by the three male and five female sponsors who were in charge for the night. When it was time to go to sleep, a few of the senior initiates went, without ceremony, into the headquarters hut to sleep in the girls' bedroom, to symbolize again the fact that the initiates were all children of that hut and that the *gĩthũnũ* was merely an extension of the girls' bedroom made so as to accommodate them all.

The night of the second day was called *mũtĩro* (an interval between ceremonies), and there was no ceremonial sex act on that night on the part of the *mũruithia* and his wife.

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The Third Day

On the morning of the third day the initiates were brought food to eat as on the morning of the second day, and they remained in the *gĩthũnũ* until everything was in readiness for the chief ceremony of the day which consisted of shaving the heads of the initiates and of the *mũruithia* and his wife, and the senior adviser and his wife.

Meanwhile, all the parents of the initiates came to the homestead with friends and relatives and brought the offerings (*mathemba*) which consisted of: a bunch of bananas of the *mũtahato* or *mũthĩrĩrĩ* species, a bottle gourd (*kĩnandũ*) of castor oil, a big gourd (*kĩnya*) of gruel, and a big *ndua* gourd of sugar-cane beer. As the parents arrived with these offerings, they placed them in a big pile in the courtyard. Then the female advisers sorted them out, taking the bananas to a certain point and making a pile of them, taking the oil and beer into the headquarters hut, and the gruel into one of the other huts in the homestead.

At the same time this was going on, the male and female sponsors were busy in one corner of the courtyard preparing special ceremonial caps which the initiates would have to don after having their heads shaved, as a symbol of putting on manhood and womanhood. The boys' caps were called *ngũrirũ*, and each male sponsor made one for his charge. The foundation of the cap was a hoop of *mũthũrũrĩga* wood, and the body was made from banana bark fibre with a high peak so that it resembled a warrior's war head-dress (*thũũmbĩ*) which, in fact, it was meant to symbolize. At the top of the peak was fixed a piece of wood from the *mũtathi* plant which had had a spiral ornamentation carved out of its bark. The significance of these caps was that, having had their "foolishness" removed from them on the previous day and then having been shaved, the male initiates were now entitled to wear the head-dresses and insignia of warriorhood.

The female sponsors had all brought with them little bits of soft leather provided by the mothers of the female initiates from old cloaks of theirs, and these the sponsors proceeded to make into little leather skull caps for each of the girl initiates. These were called *ndamĩ cia mũcee* or

ndangari. They were intended to symbolize the form of hairdressing that characterised all adult initiated girls.

The male sponsors spent some time preparing staves of *mũngirima* wood called *mĩcee*, to which they attached a few strings of beads and a few ornaments, as their contribution to the gifts which would be demanded presently by the initiates from all the assembled people.

p.635
The Shaving Ceremony

Early on that same morning, two children, a boy and a girl, both of whom had to have been "born again", were sent down to the river with gourds to fetch water for the shaving ceremony. Then, while the initiates were still in their lodge, the *mũruithia* and his wife, and the senior adviser and his wife, were ceremonially shaved in preparation for the shaving of the initiates. The *mũruithia* was shaved by his wife after a little bit of hair had been first cut off ceremonially by the young girl child who went to draw water for the shaving. This girl child likewise did the first ceremonial shaving of the others. After this ceremonial shaving, the wife of the senior adviser shaved her husband. Then the wife of the *mũruithia* shaved the wife of the senior adviser, who returned the compliment. The junior adviser and his wife were not shaved. The four who had just been shaved were liberally anointed with castor oil, and while this was being done the initiates were summoned to come from the *gĩthũnũ* in their order of precedence, boy, girl, and boy, girl, in turn, and go into the headquarters hut and sit down.

When the initiates were all in the hut the *mũruithia* and his wife, the advisers and their wives, and the guardian of the ceremonial honey beer all went into the hut and proceeded to the ceremony of testing and blessing themselves with the beer that had been brought as offerings.

Having entered the hut, the *mũruithia* took a drinking vessel and drew beer from the gourd of beer nearest to the entrance to the woman's bed. He took a mouthful, spat it on to his chest as a blessing, and handed some to each of the two male advisers, who did likewise. Then he gave some to the women to bless themselves with. This done, the guardian of the beer sat down and filled the ceremonial bottle gourd—which the senior adviser held—with honey beer from the ceremonial brewing gourd (*ndua ya mũrũngũ*). The bottle gourd was then handed to the *mũruithia*, who drank from it twice and passed it to the senior adviser, who did the same. The party then formed a procession and went out into the courtyard, where the senior adviser hung up the bottle gourd on its special post by the saddle quern and the guardian °f the ceremonial beer took his seat with the big brewing vessel of ceremonial beer on his lap. The *mũruithia* and the advisers and their Wives went to sit on their special stools in the centre of the courtyard, after which the initiates filed out, still in their order of seniority, and came for the shaving ceremony.

The line formed by the place where the advisers were sitting, and little girl who had drawn the water for shaving had to take the (p.636) new ceremonial razor that had been set aside for this purpose, and pretend to shave the two senior initiates and the two at the far end of the line. This done, the female sponsors and the women relatives of the male initiates approached the line of initiates and went through the motions of shaving their heads. As they had been fully shaved on the day before the *matuumo*, except for the one tuft which was removed on the day of the *matuumo*, there was no hair on their heads to shave off, and the shaving was purely a ceremonial one to complete the "putting off of childish things".

As soon as every initiate had been thus "shaved", the *mũruithia* and his senior adviser proceeded to put *ira* powder on each initiate, using a procedure different from that used at the *matuumo* ceremony: the senior adviser went to the head of the line of initiates, and with the *ira* in his left hand, he put his right thumb in the powder and with an upward movement slid his thumb up the bridge of the nose of the senior initiate (the son of the *mũruithia*), after which the *mũruithia* did likewise. Then they passed to the senior girl and the adviser put *ira* on her two temples, and her father did the same. They passed slowly down the line, treating every boy and every girl in the same way. Behind the *mũruithia* and the adviser came their two wives, who had a little castor oil in their left hands, and with the palms of their right hands each anointed every candidate with oil on the neck and shoulders.

Gũcũngĩra Ciana (*Bowing to the Children*)

The next ceremony was the curious one of *gũcũngĩra ciana,* the significance of which has been lost; it was described merely as "an old custom".

The *mũruithia* took his staff of office and his bunch of leaves in both hands, and the senior adviser did the same. Then, accompanied by their wives (who did not carry any insignia) they went to the line of initiates and bowed to them. It is difficult to find any English word to translate this Kikuyu term. The act of *gũcũngĩra* consisted of making a movement with the body that was like a rather jerky bow, and at the same time bringing the hands up in front of the face and down again, the staff of office being held all the time in both hands. The four of them passed down the line bowing to each initiate.

They then went back to their stools, laid down their staves of office, and called for the bottle gourd of ceremonial honey beer, with which they filled the special horn and the special drinking gourd. The *mũruithia* took the horn and his wife the drinking gourd, and each took a mouthful and passed the vessels to the senior adviser and his wife, (p.637) respectively, who also took mouthfuls. Then all together they advanced towards the initiates, and, standing in front of the senior initiates, sprayed them with the beer from their mouths. They took another mouthful and moved down the line until every initiate, male and female, had been thus blessed and had had the *ira* washed off by the ceremonial beer.

The Ceremony of Kũrathia (*To demand Donations*)

Having been blessed, the initiates were at once approached by their sponsors, who proceeded to fit the *ngũrirũ* and the *ndangari* caps to the heads of their charges, giving them the first insignia of adult status. Each male sponsor also gave his charge the *mũcee* staff with his offering of beads and ornaments attached to it, these ornaments being the first of the many such donations the initiates would receive. The female sponsors, having fitted the *ndangari* to the girls, each put a few bead necklaces on top of the *ndangari*. The girls held the beads there with their left hands and a bunch of *muondwe* leaves was put into each girls' right hand. The initiates were then told to go and *rathia* for the rest of the day among the people who had assembled for the feasting and to watch the ceremonies. This consisted of demanding "donations". The boys waved their *mũcee* staves in the faces of anyone they chose to approach and these people had to take off some ornament and add it to those on the boy's *mũcee*. The initiates thus received earrings, finger rings, wristlets, anklets, etc. which became their property and formed their ornaments of warriorhood. The girls also went round demanding contributions, and they struck (with their bunch of leaves) any person whom they wished to ask for a gift. Anyone so struck had to make a donation of some

sort, however small. The donations given to the girls were all piled on their heads, and they went about holding them there With their left and right hands alternately.

While this was taking place, the *mũruithia* produced beer, and all the assembled people were divided into their appropriate groups (see Chapter 8) and given beer to drink. They did not receive much, nor did they linger long, for at the home of each initiate beer had been brewed and the parents had to hasten back home to superintend the feasting there. Also, those who were not parents of initiates wanted to go off to these various homesteads for the beer drinking and feasting.

On this third day, too, the *mũruithia* proceeded to apportion the *mathemba* gifts. The portion of one initiate was given to each of the following: the senior adviser, the other adviser, the medicine-man (p.638) who made the magical protection for the homestead, and the guardian of the ceremonial honey beer. These people were also each given the boarding fee of one of the initiates.

That night, after everyone had gone home, ceremonial sexual intercourse took place as on the evening of the day of the actual operation, every detail being the same. This ended the third day of the period of seclusion.

The Fourth Day

Kuuna Matũ

The first of the ceremonies of the fourth day was that of *kuuna matũ*. All the parents of the initiates had to be present for this ceremony, and while they were assembling the initiates remained in the initiation lodge, while the male sponsors sat out in the entrance area cutting and sharpening wooden ear plugs for the initiates. These were made roughly, for their significance was only symbolic: the initiates would later have proper ones made for them. The *mĩtĩ ya matũ* for the girls were made from the roots of castor oil plants and those for the boys from *mũnunga* wood.

When all the parents were assembled, the initiates were summoned to enter the headquarters hut in their order of seniority, after which the *mũruithia* with his wife, the advisers with their wives, and the guardian of the ceremonial beer came in as well. The ceremony proceeded exactly as on the second day, and after the ceremonial beer had been drunk and the elders and women had gone out again and taken their seats on the ceremonial stools, the initiates filed out and knelt down four at a time on the boards (*ihengere*) in front of the *mũruithia*, the senior adviser, and their wives. Now the *ngunju*, iron earrings put into their cars on the second day, were removed, and so were the *mũcũgũcũgũ* rings, which were broken up, put on a tray, and taken to the storeroom. Having had these rings taken out of their ears, the initiates went to the sponsors, who presented them with the new car plugs that had been made for them. The sponsors also took from the initiates their *mũcee* staves (in the case of the boys) and the *mũcee* offerings of the girls, and these they handed over to the women relatives of the initiates who had brought sinew thread with them and who proceeded to make the beads up into necklaces.

Each initiate then donned his or her ornaments that were obtained (p.639) at the *rathia* ceremony on the previous day, and the necklaces that had been made from the beads. These proceedings normally lasted until about the middle of the day, and the afternoon of the fourth day was devoted to instructing the boys in the customs connected with raiding, while the girls were given instruction in the duties of adult girls. The nature of this instruction was more symbolic than practical.

The Shooting of Rats

During the afternoon the male sponsors made a number of small bows of *mũkeũ* or *mũbirũ* wood, which they strung with *mũkeũ* bark. They also made arrows with wooden points and shafts of sorghum corn stems. Meanwhile, a few sponsors had gone out and made small clearings near the homestead and put down maize and other corn to attract rats and mice, and each sponsor who did this sat over the bait with a bow and arrow and shot and killed a mouse or rat.

The boys, meanwhile, were given their bows and arrows to symbolize the weapons of warfare, and as soon as the sponsor shot a rat or mouse, he gave a shout and all the boys hastened to him, and, standing round, they shot their arrows from very close indeed at the body of the rat. Those who hit the rat would be lucky in raiding, any who failed would be unfortunate. This act was said to symbolize the slaying of enemies, and it was a token of the transition from boyhood to warriorhood that had taken place. As soon as another sponsor had killed a rat, all the boys rushed to answer his call and shoot at the rat, and so on until late afternoon, when the goats and sheep were brought back to the homestead and another ceremony to symbolize raiding, took place.

The Girls' Symbolic Tasks

While the boys were engaged in this rat shooting to symbolize killing Maasai warriors, the girls were taken out by female sponsors to neighbouring gardens and made to go through the acts of planting, weeding, and reaping, after which they were sent into the bush and each had to cut a little bundle of firewood and tie it with *mũkeũ* bark. They returned to the homestead in the late afternoon, and, in order of seniority, presented their bundle of firewood to the initiation mother. They were then given a little string bag with a bottle gourd of oil in it, and they waited ready to receive the "warriors" when they returned victorious from the "cattle raiding".

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The Symbolic Cattle Raid

When everything was ready, the male initiates were sent out to meet the *mũruithia's* flocks as they were returning home. They drove off the herdsmen, seized the flocks, and drove them triumphantly into the homestead. They were met with loud ululations from the assembled women and especially from the girl initiates. The *mũruithia* went out to meet them, and they presented the "captured" stock to him as their father. Then, under the instruction of the male sponsors, the boy initiates proceeded to dance and sing the *Rũĩmbo rũa Ng'ombe* (The Song of Triumph for having raided Cattle) and the *Rũĩmbo rũa Mũndũ* (The Song of Triumph for having killed a Man). The *Rũĩmbo rũa Ng'ombe*, which follows, was repeated again and again while the singers marched round and round jumping up and down.

Ĩĩ-hũ-i-yũ! Rũũhiũ! Ĩĩ-hũ-i-yũ!	*Ĩĩ-hũ-i-yũ!* Shout for joy! *Ĩĩ-hũ-i-yũ!*
Hũũ! Rũũhiũ thĩrĩ. Hũũ!	*Hũũ!* Shout thus! *Hũũ!*
Hũũ! Thĩrĩ!	*Hũũ!* Yes, thus!

The *Rũĩmbo*, or *Rũũhiũ rũa Mũndũ* was as follows:

Hũũ-rũ-hũũ ! Rũngĩteng'a	*Hũũ-rũ-hũũ !* If you are in difficulties
Thengenya, ĩgũthĩre!	Push him, and hit back!
Hũũ! Hũ-i-yũ! Hũũ!	*Hũũ! Hũ-i-yũ! Hũũ!*

Meanwhile, the *mũruithia* brought out saline earth and ceremonially gave it to the "raided cattle" as he would have done in the case of stock brought back from a real raid. Then the male initiates went to the headquarters hut and handed over their weapons, that is, the miniature bow and arrow, to the initiation mother, just as they would have to go and hand over their real weapons to their own mothers when they returned from a real raid. The girls and boys then went to the *gĩthũnũ* to

eat and rest and to have their wounds attended to for the last time by the sponsors. On the next day the sponsors would ceremonially wash their hands, and would never again touch the genitalia of their charges.

The Fifth Day

Very early in the morning of the fifth day, before it was really light and before anyone was about, the initiates were roused and made to form into file. They then went into the headquarters hut and out again (p.641) straight away, in order that they might be taken for the ceremony of *gũthiĩ mũkũyũ-inĩ* (going to the *mũkũyũ* tree). The boys were all wearing their *ngũrirũ* caps and the girls their *ndangari*.

The senior adviser and his wife had got up still earlier and had already been to the *mũkũyũ* fig tree selected for the purpose, to ask a blessing. The *mũkũyũ* fig tree, while not a sacred tree of the Kikuyu, was regarded as the embodiment of Kikuyu life and wealth, and was therefore of great importance. The adviser had taken with him to the tree a gourdful of beer, which he had poured out at the foot of the tree, and some honey which he smeared on it, and then he had prayed to the tree (not to God or to the ancestral spirits), asking for a blessing upon the initiates, and upon the *mũruithia*. He had then returned to the initiation homestead, and the procession of initiates, headed by two sponsors, set out for the tree. Having arrived there, the senior sponsor, that is, the one who was sponsor for the son of the *mũruithia* (in some districts it was the senior adviser who had already prayed at the tree who conducted the ceremonies) took a sharpened stick of *mũthakwa* or *mũkeũ* wood and pushed it into the *mũkũyũ* tree to make it drip "milk". He then put the end of the stick into this juice and with it made a white mark on the right cheek of the senior male initiate, and a line round his eye to the centre of his forehead. As he did so he said, "*Ndakũhe itaha rĩa ng'ombe na rĩa kũũragana*". (I give you success in raiding, both for cattle and to kill enemies). He then put some of the milky juice on the top of the initiate's right leg and said, "*Ũyũ nĩ rũrua ndakũhaka, rũa itaha, na mũũnyũ wa kũũragana*". (This is cattle dung that I anoint you with that you may have success in raiding, and saline earth that you may slay your enemies). The initiate cupped his hands and held them out, and these also were marked with the milky juice and the sponsor said, "*Ũgĩtonge, kĩndũ wanyita ũkĩrũmie*" (May you become rich and everything you lay hold of may you keep.) The actual words varied somewhat with the whim of the person performing the ceremony, but the sense was always the same.

The other sponsor then came and together the two of them similarly treated and anointed all the other male initiates. They then treated the girls by putting the milky juice on both temples, on the neck, on both nipples, and on their hands. After this the sponsors uttered a blessing upon them too, that they might be fruitful, that when they had children they might be strong, and that they might get rich husbands.

When every boy and girl initiate had thus had the blessing of the *mũkũyũ* tree, they reformed into a file in order of seniority and were led round the tree, after which they set out for the initiation village again, singing, and dancing.

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By this time the morning was advanced, everyone was up and about and all the women of the whole village of the initiation homestead came out and greeted the initiates with ululations to show their joy that the initiates had been thus blessed. The procession entered the courtyard and went up to the headquarters hut where the initiation mother met them and received from each his or her ceremonial cap. She then anointed them on the forehead and neck with castor oil, which was

poured out profusely and ran down all over their bodies. The initiates then repaired to the initiation lodge to have some food and to rest.

All the sponsors, male and female, who had been in charge of the initiates, now assembled, and proceeded, after washing their hands to pound sugar-cane, wring out the juice, and prepare sugar-cane beer. This ceremony was called *gwĩthamba moko* (to wash or purify the hands). It was the sugar-cane juice which did the ceremonial purifying, the washing in water being merely a preliminary physical cleansing.

When the sponsors had thus purified their hands, the *mũruithia* provided a he-goat for slaughter. This was called *thenge ya gwĩtiira* (a he-goat for supporting or propping oneself up) and it was cut up by the male sponsors, but the *mũruithia* had a rawhide strip cut off the breast skin and put on his right-hand middle finger, next to the one from the ram slaughtered on the first day. The meat of the ram was eaten by the sponsors and by any of the initiates who cared to do so.

The greater part of the afternoon was spent by the initiates in dancing the songs of the warriors and maidens such as *ndiiri, gĩcukia,* and *mũgoiyo*. The male initiates were also taught the *ngurũ* and *kĩbaaia* songs, tunes, and steps. In all of this dancing they were instructed by the male and female sponsors, and in dancing all of these dances they symbolized the fact that as adults they had now put away childish dances and were entitled to dance the adult ones.

That evening no sponsors joined the initiates in the lodge, for having been purified they did not wish to defile themselves again, and the initiates no longer needed attention to their wounds which were (or should have been) healing nicely by this time.

After dark, when the people of the homestead had retired, the initiates were again called into the headquarters hut to be present at the sacrifice of ceremonial sexual intercourse, but on this occasion they did not have to step over the banana bark with stomach contents on it. This had been put into the storeroom to remain there until all ceremonies were over. So ended the fifth day.

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The Sixth Day

On the morning of the sixth day, the initiates, having eaten, filed into the headquarters hut in order that the ceremonial drinking of the honey beer might take place, along with the testing of the sugar-cane beer brewed on the previous day, and then they went out into the courtyard. For them on this day there was no special ceremony until nightfall, and they spent the day eating, resting, and dancing on their own.

The important ceremonies of the day concerned chiefly the male and female sponsors (*atiiri*) who, though they were not really old enough to drink beer, had one *kĩnya* gourd of sugar-cane beer allotted to the men and one to the women in the general beer drinking that took place. Each sponsor had to drink a little as a symbol of the fact that he or she had been released from his or her duties. The rest of their share they gave to their elders, after which they dispersed and went home. That evening the initiates were ceremonially taken visiting (*gũthiĩ ũgeni*). This was to symbolize the fact that as adults they might go visiting when and how they liked and no longer had to sleep in their parents' homesteads and let their parents know what they were doing. They were therefore taken to sleep in the homesteads of various neighbours of the *mũruithia,* instead of in the lodge.

The Seventh Day

They returned to the initiation lodge early next morning to eat. Then they spent the rest of the day eating, resting, and dancing, with no special ceremonies of any kind until nightfall, when, for the last time, they went to the headquarters hut to be present at the ceremonial sexual intercourse.

The Eighth Day

The eighth day of the seclusion period (or the ninth day since the *matuumo* ceremonies inaugurated the initiation) was the day the initiates all left the homestead where the initiation ceremonies had taken place and went to their respective homes.

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The first, third, fifth, and seventh days of the seclusion period were those on which the ceremonial sex acts had taken place, and at first this appears curious in view of the fact that in all such protracted ceremonies the Kikuyu disliked performing such acts on odd, as distinct from even, days, and more especially on a seventh day. This anomaly is explained by the fact that although the days were the odd numbers counting from the beginning of the seclusion period, they were even numbers counting from the day of the *matuumo* (the day the ceremonies really started). Also, sending the initiates home on the ninth day after the *matuumo* emphasised once again the importance of the number nine in Kikuyu custom, and it is linked with the fact that nine is the number of months of human pregnancy. In fact, the word for nine (*kenda*) means literally "it is in the womb".

On this, the ninth day of the initiation ceremonies, and the eighth day of the seclusion period (the eighth day since the initiates last slept in their own homes), the initiates returned home, and the ceremonies connected with this day varied a little according to whether members of the family from which the initiate came were in the habit of having their own *inũkia* (bringing home) ceremony on that day or not. We will first consider the ceremonies for those to be received home by their own parents on that same day, as this was the more common procedure, and then the variations of these ceremonies that were necessary for initiates who, for one reason or another, were not to go through the *inũkia* ceremony immediately.

Very early in the morning of the day when the initiates were to be sent back to their own homes, the parents of every initiate who had been boarding out, and for whom it was proposed to perform the *inũkia* ceremony that day, arranged for a boy and girl who had been "born again" but who were not yet old enough for initiation to go out and await the returning initiate and escort him or her home. It was considered very important that the first people that each initiate met on his way home should be such a boy and girl, for they were omens of good fortune.

At the initiation homestead, very early on that same morning, all the initiates were roused, formed into file in order of seniority for the last time, and marched to the headquarters hut. As they entered it, each one was met by the initiation mother and was anointed on the head and neck with castor oil as a blessing. They then passed into the hut, and the senior boy and senior girl, who belonged to the initiation homestead, went straight to the girls' bedroom and waited there. After all the others had entered, they proceeded to file out of the hut again, in the same order. As they came to the door of the hut to pass (p.645) out each boy was given his ceremonial bow and arrow and he handed over one of his three *mũngirima* wands, which had been made for him by his sponsor, as had been his *mũcee* staff. The girls were handed their little string bags and their little gourds of oil, and they too, each handed over one *mũngirima* wand to the initiation mother. (They had all been given three wands. The two they retained would be used by both boys and girls to beat time in the *waine* dance. See Chapter 11). The one was handed over as "hostage", and if the parents of any

initiate failed to send the various things that were due to the initiation mother from time to time in the future (in recognition of the fact that she was their ceremonial mother) she could then "bind" the wand of the person concerned, and by doing so bind the person and so prevent him or her from being successful in all undertakings.

As soon as each initiate had been through this ceremony, he or she set out for home in the first light of early dawn, and was met on the way by the boy and girl above mentioned. The children turned round and escorted the initiate to his or her own village, but not to the family homestead. Having arrived at the home village, the initiate was met and taken to the hut of some woman past childbearing who was living alone. Here food was brought by the mother and father for the initiate to eat while he or she waited for the *inũkia* ceremony to begin.

The Inũkia (*Bringing Home*) *Ceremony*

The sacrifice that opened the ceremony could not start until mid-afternoon, for it was important that it should be in progress when the flocks and herds of the homestead came home for the night. Meanwhile, the mother of the initiate and her friends spent the day preparing a special new brew of castor oil to be used in the ceremony, and cooking food for the ceremonial feast, which included *njahĩ* beans and bulrush millet gruel.

To begin the ceremony the sacrificial animal (a ram) was slaughtered. The undigested stomach contents were removed and part of them put into a bit of green banana bark, and part into a small new half-gourd, while the warriors of the homestead were completing the cutting of the meat, the initiate's father went to pick four *mũtei* twigs and four *mũgumo* twigs. He brought these, tied them into two bunches, each consisting of two twigs of each species, and put them in the half-gourd with the stomach contents.

The small half-gourd and the green banana bark with the stomach intents were then taken into the hut of the mother of the returning (p.646) initiate. The following joints were set to roast: one foreleg (or both if the returning initiate was a girl), both the half-saddle joints (*makengeto*) the intestines (*mara*), the liver (*ini*), the dorsal sac of the rumen (*ihu rĩa maĩ*), the last cervical and first four thoracic vertebrae (*mũkua-tũhũ*) and the caecum (*kĩboroboro*). The other joints were taken into the initiate's mother's hut and set to boil. (If the homestead had many warriors attached to it, the *gĩthũri*, breast, was not boiled, but was roasted instead).

Preliminary arrangements having thus been completed, the initiate (or both initiates if there had been two from one homestead) was summoned from the hut where he or she had spent the day, and followed the flocks and herds into the courtyard of the home. The initiate then went round to the fire where the sacrificial meat was roasting, and then to the doorway of his or her mother's hut. Here the initiate was met by both parents. The father had some *ira* powder in his left hand, and the mother was holding a little gourd full of the newly brewed castor oil. A male initiate had *ira* powder put on his nose and forehead, his neck, his navel, and on both big toes. A girl initiate had *ira* rubbed on both her temples instead of her forehead and nose, but otherwise had the same treatment as a boy. The mother then put castor oil over each place where the *ira* powder had been rubbed, and poured the rest over the initiate's head and shoulders.

During this ceremony, the male initiate had been holding his bow and arrow, *mũcee* staff, and wands. These were now handed to his mother. The bow and arrow were stuck into the thatch just over the entrance to his mother's hut, and here they stayed until the day that he got married. His *mũcee* staff and the two wands were put with them. The girl initiate had been holding her string

bag, her oil bottle, and her two wands. The bag and oil bottle were now hung on a peg by her mother's bed, and her two wands put at the head end of the bed. Then the initiate entered the hut, twice dipping one foot into the ram's stomach contents in the bit of green banana bark, and stepping over it.

Inside the hut, the initiate was given a new stool of either *mũringa* or *mũkũyũ* wood, and once seated, a ceremonial meal of *njahĩ* beans and gruel was set before him or her, which had to be consumed in entirety- These foods had to have been cooked and prepared with water drawn by a woman other than the mother of the initiate. When this food had been consumed, the initiate's father cut five bits of meat (or four for a girl), one off an *ikengeto* (half-saddle joint) and the rest from a roasted foreleg. He put these into a half-gourd and sent them into the hut with the woman who had drawn the water for cooking the ceremonial food. He also sent one piece for the mother of the initiate. Then, before the (p.647) initiate ate the meat, the father, out in the courtyard, took two bites from the meat remaining on the two joints, and the mother two bites from her piece. Thus the parents of the returned initiate ceremonially shared in the sacrificial meat. Now the remaining roasted joints were divided among the rest of the family gathering out in the courtyard, after which they dispersed to their own huts for their supper.

Later in the evening, when everyone had retired and the homestead was in silence, the initiate stood in front of his mother's bed for the ceremony of purification. This was a precautionary measure in case by any chance the initiate had unknowingly been in contact with some unclean person in the initiation lodge, as for example, a girl who had menstruated before initiation but had succeeded in hiding the fact, or a person who had been born feet first or in any other abnormal manner. This purification ceremony was started by the father, and while the mother held the half-gourd containing the stomach contents, the father stood behind the initiate and twice wiped him or her downwards with the stomach contents, and then twice upwards from feet to head. Then he stood in front and repeated this performance, twice up and twice down. Next the father took the half-gourd and the mother repeated the whole purification, after which she put the half-gourd and leaves at the head end of her bed and the initiate retired to sleep in the girls' bed. The parents waited until their child was asleep and then they had ceremonial sexual intercourse twice.

Next morning, the following joints were sent to the homestead where the initiation ceremonies had taken place: one roasted foreleg, one roasted half-saddle joint, one pelvic bone with part of the leg meat attached, one half of the jaw, and some fat. On the same morning the initiate went out to join the others at some agreed point and they started on the next stage of their lives, the novitiate, which is described m the next chapter.

Special Circumstances prevented, the Inũkia Ceremony

It sometimes happened that while an initiate was away for initiation, the mother had a menstrual period, or a sister or half-sister had her first menses, or somebody died at home. If this happened, when the day came for the return of the initiate, the parents were not in a position to carry out the necessary *inũkia* ceremonies, since other ceremonies were either happening or pending, or the mother was temporary unable to have ceremonial intercourse, as she was unclean. In such circumstances, the father sent a message to the *mũruithia* on the (p.648) day before the initiates were to be sent home, and requested that his son or daughter not be anointed with oil when being given his or her belongings before going home.

The initiate was, however, met and escorted home by a boy and girl in the usual manner, but on arrival at the home village did not have to go and spend the day at an old woman's hut, but went

straight home, was anointed with *ira* and with oil, and handed over the bow and arrow (or bag and oil bottle) to his or her mother.

No further ceremony took place then, and everything was postponed until the circumstances which had prevented the *inũkia* ceremony were past. Then a day was fixed for the *inũkia* ceremonies, and the initiate was given back his bow and arrow (or bag and oil bottle), and had to go and sleep at some friends' home for the night. Early next morning a boy and girl were sent to escort the initiate home as though he or she had just come from the initiation homestead, and the ceremonies proceeded exactly as described above.

If Special Custom precluded the Inũkia Ceremony

In some Kikuyu sub-clans and families, age-long custom prevented the *inũkia* ceremonies taking place because in the distant past some major misfortune had befallen the family after an *inũkia* ceremony had been observed. In such cases the parents notified the *mũruithia* that their child would not undergo any *inũkia* ceremony and that therefore there would be no meat to send on the following day. They also requested that the initiate should not be anointed with oil before leaving.

When such initiates returned home, they were, as usual, escorted by a boy and girl. When they arrived, they went straight to their mother's hut, were anointed with *ira* and castor oil, handed over their things, and went into the hut, where they were given a new stool to sit on and some gruel and cooked *njahĩ* beans to eat to signify their freedom from the restriction against *njahĩ* beans during the seclusion period. There was, however, no ceremony of stepping over the stomach contents, no purification, and no ceremonial sexual intercourse.

As far as boy initiates in these circumstances were concerned, there was no other ceremony at all except that which was connected with the novitiate (see next chapter). Girls, however, when they had passed out of the novice stage several months later, had to be purified. This purification was, if possible, arranged to take place before the girl's first menses, and it was similar in most respects to the purification that normally took place on the evening of the *inũkia* ceremony. The only (p.649) differences were that the girl was washed over with the stomach contents six times from behind and four times from in front, and that the ceremonial sex act between the parents was performed only once instead of twice.

The Final Ceremonies at the Initiation Homestead

There was no need to perform any *inũkia* ceremony for the initiates who were the actual children of the initiation mother, for they were already at home. After the lapse of one night, the father and mother had ceremonial sexual intercourse twice on behalf of their own children, and later, after the period of the novitiate was completed, both initiates had to have a ram sacrificed for them so as to be purified, in case they had come into contact with any "unclean" person during the period of seclusion in the initiation lodge.

On the other hand, if the *mũruithia* was a man with many wives and if one of his children had been initiated who belonged to some hut in his homestead other than the headquarters hut, that child would have to have an *inũkia* ceremony performed in just the same way as any initiate from another homestead, for the child had been boarded out (*hithia*) in a hut not belonging to its own mother. This ceremony, however, had to be postponed for a whole month, because it could not take place until the *mũruithia* had returned to normal life once more. Such an initiate therefore had to wait for the *inũkia* ceremony, and had to go on sleeping in the headquarters hut during this time of waiting, although eating now in his or her own mother's hut.

In the case of a boy or girl who was "borrowed" from a friend and temporarily adopted as son or daughter, he or she would not return home until the period of the novitiate was over.

The Kikuyu Guild Ceremonies following the Period of Seclusion

The Ceremonies for removing the Magical Protection from the Initiation Homestead

On the day that the initiates all went to their own homes, the *mũruithia*, his wife, and all members of the family rested after the exertions and (p.650) mental strain of the previous nine days. On the following morning , the portions of meat that had to be sent from every home where an *inũkia* ceremony had taken place, started arriving, and the morning was devoted to eating the meat, which was shared by every member of the *mũruithia'*s family but by no outsiders, not even his advisers. The afternoon was given up to the preparation of beer in readiness for the ceremonies of the following day, when the medicine-man would come and take down the magical protection that he had set up, and purify the homestead so that it might return to normal conditions again.

When the medicine-man arrived, he went first to the headquarters hut where the beer for this ceremony had been brewed, and there he was given a drinking horn and a drinking gourd cup of beer. He went out with these and poured a little at the saddle quern and a little at the magical entrance, as an offering to God, who had blessed his work. Then he went back to the hut again, and was given a full drinking horn to "bless himself with". The beer was then taken into the courtyard, poured off into *kĩnya* gourds, and taken back to the hut again.

The medicine-man then proceeded to the magical entrance and set to work to take it to pieces. The dry banana leaf (*itharara*) that had been hung on a tree in the entrance area was not taken down, for it did not affect everyone entering the homestead and it was a useful safeguard for the *mũruithia* to retain.

The first part of the magical entrance to be dismantled was the crossbar of the two sticks of sugar-cane. He took these down, carefully untied the knots in the *mũriĩra* roots, and untied the bunch of leaves that hung from the middle. Everything had to be untied without cutting or breaking the bindings, and as each knot was undone he applied *ira* powder to it. Having separated the sticks of sugar-cane, he broke each of them across his knee and chewed a little of the root end of one, giving the root end of the other to the *mũruithia* to chew. Next, he pulled up the two *mũthakwa* posts that formed the sides of the magical entrance, and rubbed *ira* powder on them. Then he took up the *mũrigono* withies that were bound together with *mũriĩra* roots and proceeded to unbind them carefully, rubbing *ira* powder on all the knots as he did so. He then applied *ira* powder to each withy. Having thus dismantled the entrance, he deposited all the component parts in a pile in the centre of the courtyard, and turned his attention to the saddle quern.

That morning the axe head and the piece of *mũthakwa* wood that had been used to serve the porridge (*ngima*) on the *matuumo* day had been placed on the saddle quern, and the medicine-man first purified (p.651) them with *ira*. The axe head was then handed back to its owner and the bit of *mũthakwa* wood was thrown on to the floor of the headquarters hut to be swept up next day.

Then the medicine-man rubbed *ira* on each of the four *mũthakwa* posts that surrounded the saddle quern, after which he pulled them up broke them across his knee, and added them to the pile in the centre of the courtyard. He was particularly careful to see that the fork in the one post was broken off. Then he rubbed *ira* powder on to the two ends and two sides of the stone itself and raised it slowly, rubbing more *ira* on its edges as he did so. He handed the stone over to the woman to whom it belonged without further ceremony. She had to grind a little corn on it at once, making a

little gruel for herself, to complete the purification of the stone. Under the stone was the deep hole containing the bundle as described earlier. Before the bundle was actually withdrawn from the hole, a little beer was poured in over it, along with some finger millet grain and a little raw honey. The bundle was then taken up by the medicine-man, who slowly and carefully unwrapped it and untied all the *mũriĩra* roots. After it had been unwrapped, its contents and all the wrappings were rubbed over with *ira* powder, and the wrappings were placed on the pile in the courtyard while the string bag and the bit of axe handle were thrown in a corner of the hut where they would be left to rot away. They might not be either burnt or swept up and thrown away.

The medicine-man then called for beer from a mixture of sugarcane juice and honey and poured some of this into the holes where he had pulled up the four *mũthakwa* posts, and into the hole where the *kĩoho* (charm) bundle had been buried. He handed the beer to the *mũruithia*, who did likewise, after which the initiation mother sprinkled finger millet grain in each hole, on the ground, and round about where the stone had been set up.

Next the medicine-man took a little of each of the following magic powders: *rũthuko*, *kĩnoria*, *ũũmũ*, *thiari*, and *mũcanjamũka*, and sprinkled them in the holes, after which the holes were filled up with earth, and more beer, finger millet grain, and magic powders were sprinkled over the ground.

Now the beer that had been poured off was brought out and the medicine-man proceeded to apportion it in accordance with custom (see Chapter 8), and everyone who had assembled participated in this beer drinking, which went on until mid-afternoon, when the guests departed, leaving only the members of the family. Then, when the and sheep had come home for the night and all members of the family were present, the medicine-man sprinkled some of each of his (p.652) five magic powders on to the pile of rubbish in the middle of the court, yard, and set fire to it with embers from the headquarters hut. then went home, after arranging to come again on the next day but one to purify the *mũruithia* and his wife. He received no fee, as the one he had been given a few days earlier covered this service. The members of the family sat by the bonfire (*icua*) in the courtyard until it died out and then retired for the night.

During the day, while the medicine-man had been busy with the ceremonies described above, some of the members of the family had helped the initiation mother to pull down the initiation lodge and pil$_e$ up all the building materials behind her hut. There they had to remain until they rotted; on no account might they be burned.

The Ceremony of Sweeping Out the Hut

Next morning the initiation mother proceeded to sweep out the headquarters hut very carefully, collecting all the *mũcũgũcũgũ* earrings, the bits of *nguurua* (withy necklets), and the materials from which the *ngũrirũ* and *ndangari* ceremonial caps had been made. These she threw beyond the homestead midden, for they might not be burnt. The *mũruithia* ceremonially sprinkled beer over the place where the bonfire had been as an offering to the ancestral spirits. Then he sprinkled some sheep and goat dung over the ashes, which might not be swept up, but had to be left in the centre of the courtyard until they were gradually scattered by being walked upon or blown away by the wind.

The Purification of the Mũruithia and his Wife

The purification of the *mũruithia* and his wife was considered to be necessary in case one of the initiates who had been boarding with them had been an unclean person, such as a girl who had had

her first menses prior to the initiation, or a person who had been born feet first. If such was the case, the *mũruithia* and his wife, in the capacity of acting father and mother to the initiates, would have been rendered unclean simply by the fact of having had ceremonial intercourse on their behalf. It was therefore necessary to take precautions rather than await any ill fortune that might result.

Moreover, as the principal performers in the *rite de passage* the (p.653) initiates had undergone, the *mũruithia* and his wife had made themselves unfit for everyday life, and until they had been purified they might not resume normal family life or their everyday work. The ceremony was a lengthy and complicated one, and all the woman's children, including those who had just been through the initiation ceremony (but not any who had been initiated previously) had to take part in certain purification rites. In the morning, as soon as the medicine-man arrived, the *mũruithia* gave him either a ram or a ewe, which the medicine-man took into the bush beyond the entrance and slaughtered with the help of his assistant and two council elders from the village. When the animal had been cut up, the medicine-man took from it the following: a long piece of the intestines and gut, one foot with the skin attached, the third chamber of the stomach (*gakuo kaingĩ*), into which he stuffed as much of the stomach contents as it would hold, and the *mwĩgunyi* (part of the stomach). This latter he proceeded to cut up into eight small strips, which he then pierced and used as special *ngwaro* strips to be put upon the two middle fingers and the two first toes of the *mũruithia* and his wife. Having prepared these things, he set them on one side and went off to collect a leafy twig of each of the following nine species of plants: *mũkenia*, *mũcatha*, *mũtei*, *mũkengeria*, *mũcingiri*, *mũthakwa*, *mũkeũ*, *mũgwata-ng'ondu*, and *coco*. These he bound into two bunches tied with *mũriĩra* roots, one bunch having five species and the other four.

Meanwhile, he had sent the wife of the *mũruithia* down to the nearest stream to fetch a gourdful of water and to pick a big green banana leaf of the *mũtahato* variety, which was to serve as a lining to the purification basin to be used in the ceremony. When everything was ready, the medicine-man left his assistant and the two council elders to roast the meat, while he went into the homestead. He dug a hole just in front of the doorway of the headquarters hut, and lined it with the banana leaf. Into this basin he put the stomach contents that were in the *gakuo kaingĩ*, and then added a part of the water that the woman had fetched from the river.

Then he put into the water some of each of the following magic powders: *ũũmũ*, *rũthuko*, *ng'ondu*, *kĩnoria*, and *mũcanjamũka*. He summoned the *mũruithia* and his wife and put the strips mentioned above on to their fingers and toes, and told them to sit down side by side with their backs to the door of the headquarters hut, facing the entrance to the homestead. Then the children who belonged to that hut, that is, the children of that particular wife, including the two new initiates, were (p.654) made to sit down behind their parents. The whole family was then encircled and bound together with the intestines of the sheep, and as the medicine-man wound the intestines round them he said, "*Ndamũrigicĩria ũrĩa mwarigicĩirũo nĩ ũũru wa irema na ciũgũ na kĩĩ*". (I encircle as you may have been encircled by any evil derived from any people born in an abnormal manner or by any other evil).

Then he dipped the third chamber of the stomach and the foot of the slaughtered animal into the mixture in the basin, after which he took these two things round the members of the family, first clockwise then counter-clockwise, thus encircling (*thiũrũra*) them. Then he dipped these into the mixture repeatedly, and after each dip held them to the mouths of the *mũruithia* and his wife, pronouncing as he did so a series of formulae in which he recounted all the possible ills and evils that might have contaminated them. There were no fixed formulae, and each medicine-man had

his own, but the sense was always the same. He said such words as "*Ndamũtahĩkia ũndũ mwahutatĩirũo nĩguo*" (I purify you from anything that turned its back upon you), "*Ndamũtahĩkia thakame yokire na andũ*" (I purify you from blood brought in by people), etc. and ended up by saying, "*Ndamũtahĩkia thahu o wothe*". (I purify you from all ceremonial evil.) Having been through the list of all possible ills, he solemnly got up and took the foot and the stomach that he had been using, and that had now become impregnated with any evil that might have been in the people, and carried them out into the bush and threw them away.

Then he unwound the intestines that had been binding the members of the family together, and made them all stand up and face the headquarters hut in a line, one behind the other, with the *mũruithia* first and his wife second, followed by the children in order of their ages, the eldest first. They had to stand with their legs apart, and the medicine-man threaded the intestines between their legs, starting from the father. He let the intestines lie on the ground between all their legs for a few moments, and then seized the end projecting from between the last child's legs and solemnly drew it through all their legs and out again into the open. As he did so, he said:

"*Ndoimagaria ũũru ũrĩa wokire gũkũ; warĩ wa mũthemba wa ihĩĩ, ndoimagarie guo; warĩ wa mũthemba wa irĩgũ iria irema, ndoimagaria guo; kwarĩ o mũndũ wokire na mĩthaiga ehie irua, nĩwe ndoimagaria , ndoimagaria mũndũ warĩ na mũrimũ mũũru, ndoimagaria mũndũ warĩ na ũũru wothe*."

(I escort out the evil which entered the place; whether it was connected with boys, or with girls who were *irema* (abnormal people); I escort (p.655) it out; if any man came here with witchcraft to spoil the initiation rite, I escort him out; I escort out anyone who came with a foul disease; I escort out anyone who had any kind of evil). All the time he was saying this he was gradually dragging the intestines across the courtyard, through the entrance area, and out into the bush, where he threw them away.

He then returned to the people he was purifying and told them to sit down facing the headquarters hut. The children were made to sit behind their parents. He then added some more *ng'ondu* and *rũthuko* magic powders, to the mixture in the basin, and taking his two bunches of leaves, he dipped the stem ends into the mixture and proceeded to tahĩkia the man and his wife. During this procedure, he sat both in front of them and between them and the door of their hut. He worked for a while with his arms crossed at the wrists right over left, after which he repeated the process with his arms left over right. Then he turned the bunches round, and dipping the leafy ends into the mixture, again repeated the process, but with his arms not crossed. This done, he gave each of the two a little plain water with which to rinse out their mouths, thus symbolizing their freedom from the various ceremonial ills. Next they stood up, and using the leafy ends of the two bunches of leaves, he first wiped the man and his wife downwards with the mixture, twice from the back and twice from in front (*kũinamia*—to turn downwards), and then upwards, twice from the back and twice from the front (gũtiirĩra—for propping up). He then instructed both the man and his wife to wash themselves with the mixture in the basin, and while they were doing this, he went into the headquarters hut to sweep it out ceremonially and purify it. He paid special attention to the bed where the ceremonial sex acts had taken place, to the storeroom where the earrings and caps and other objects of the initiates had been stored, and to the doorway of the hut which people might have defiled by rubbing against the door posts.

When he came to the doorway on his way out, he picked up a number of goat droppings (*mbimbi*), and ceremonially turned them over, saying as he did so, "*Nĩndagarũra ciana na andũ agima, maagĩre*". (I turn over the children and grown-ups of this hut so that they may flourish).

When the man and his wife had washed in the basin they wiped themselves over with *muondwe* and *mũkeũ* leaves, and the medicine-man rejoined them. He untied his bunches of special leaves, put them into the basin, and bade the man and woman step over (*tagarara*) the basin its contents. After this he picked up the banana leaf that was the lining, carried it and its contents out, and threw them in the bush (p.656) beyond the entrance, saying as he did so, "*Nĩndate ũũru wothe*". (*I have* thrown away all the evil).

The medicine-man then returned to the headquarters hut and put *ira* powder on the doorposts at the entrance to the bed and at the entrance to the storeroom. Then he approached the *mũruithia* and held out his left hand containing *ira* powder. The *mũruithia* dipped his own right thumb into the powder and rubbed it on the tip of his own tongue on the bridge of his nose, on his neck, on his navel, and on his two big toenails. The medicine-man then dipped his right thumb into the *ira* and rubbed some on the woman's tongue, on her temples, her neck her navel, and on the tips (not the nails) of her big toes. He similarly anointed the children, after which he put a little of each of his five magic powders (already listed) into his right palm, and each of the people being purified licked a little of the mixture in turn. When the medicine-man touched the woman's right toe he said, "*Maatha ihĩ*" (Seek boys), and when he touched her left toe he said, "*Maatha irĩgũ*" (Seek girls). This was a blessing and an expression of his hope that she would beget many children. The man and his wife and family then went into the headquarters hut and there husband and wife anointed each other with castor oil and then anointed their children. This was *kũruria ira* (to wipe away the *ira* powder).

While they were in the hut doing this, the medicine-man put a little *ira* powder, a little *kĩnoria*, and a little *rũthuko* into the hole that had been dug as a basin for the ceremony, and when the woman came out, she added a little castor oil and finger millet grain. This concluded the purification ceremony, and the man and his wife both removed their special cloaks, which were put away in a special receptacle until another year. The two might now resume normal life except that they might not have sexual intercourse of any kind at all for one full month. Should any occasion requiring a ceremonial sex act occur, that ceremony would have to be postponed until the month was over.

The medicine-man went out to where the meat was roasting and divided it up, giving the *mũruithia* one foreleg, one half-saddle joint, one cheek, some of the intestines and liver, and part of the dorsal sac of the rumen. The council elders received one foreleg, one half-saddle joint, one cheek, part of the intestines, and part of the liver. All the rest, including the skin, belonged to the medicine-man himself as his fee.

Neither the *mũruithia*, his wife, nor any of her children might eat any of the meat given back to the *mũruithia*. Instead, it had to be divided among the co-wives and their families.

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Exceptions to the Normal Initiation Procedure of the Kikuyu Guild

The Effects of a Death and Bloodshed in the Initiation Homestead

On the Day of the Matuumo

Ordinarily, a person would not fix the day for the start of the *matuumo* ceremonies if any members of his family were seriously ill, lest death should follow and upset the whole proceedings. However, as death sometimes comes suddenly, cases did occur where a member of the homestead

in which the initiation ceremonies were being staged died suddenly on the very day when the *matuumo* ceremonies were taking place.

If such a thing happened, the whole initiation was cancelled immediately, all the candidates were sent back home, and all the fees (other than beer) were given back to the parents. The parents then made arrangements for their children to be initiated elsewhere. If the *mũruithia* wished, he could make arrangements for another ceremony after the lapse of a month, but normally he would make arrangements to board out his own children, who were to have been the senior initiates, in another homestead, and would not try to arrange for any further initiation ceremony at his own homestead for several years. If, on the other hand, on the day of the *matuumo* one of the people who had come to watch the ceremonies was taken suddenly ill and died inside the homestead, the proceedings would not be interrupted, but a ram would be quickly slaughtered to purify the spot where the death had occurred.

On the Day of the Operation, but before the Initiates had entered the headquarters Hut

It sometimes happened that one of the members of the homestead where the initiation ceremony was to take place (other than the *mũruithia* himself or his wife) died on the day of the actual operation, but before evening when the initiates first entered the headquarters hut and so became linked to it.

If this happened, the whole of the proceedings were suspended for (p.658) three days, the procedure being as follows. As soon as it was known that such a death had occurred, the initiates were all taken to the men's hut of the homestead and were secluded there with a few sponsors to look after their wounds. (When the initiates went thus into temporary seclusion in the men's hut they took with them the fig leaves tied to the corners of their cloaks and retained these until the proceedings were resumed). The medicine-man who had set up the saddle quern and who had made the magical gateway was hastily summoned to dismantle the gateway, and take up the stone, just as though the ceremonies had come to an end, thus putting the homestead quickly back to normal. The only variation in the procedure he adopted was that the things he took down could not be burnt in a bonfire, but were thrown away. As soon as the homestead had returned to normal, the ordinary arrangements for the disposal of the dead body were set in hand according to regular custom (see Chapter 22). On the day after the body had been disposed of, there was an interval (*mũtĩro*) of a full day for mourning, followed the next day by the purification ceremonies which were required to remove the uncleanness caused by contact with death.

On the fourth day, early in the morning, a different medicine-man was called in, and proceeded to erect a new magical gateway, set the saddle quern up again, and generally make the necessary magical preparations. That day was treated as though it was the *matuumo* day, except the initiates were not sent to a *mũgumo* tree, but to a *mũkenia* bush to break branches off in imitation of the *mũgumo* tree ceremony.

The next morning they were taken outside the entrance of the homestead and there an elder and his wife pretended to operate upon each initiate with a *mũthakwa* splinter, thus symbolically making this day into the day of the operation.

Any part of the real ceremonies properly belonging to the operation day that had not yet taken place when the death occurred were then carried out in full detail, and all the subsequent proceedings for the next eight days were followed exactly as though there had been no break in the ceremonies at all.

There was one curious fact connected with a happening such as that described above. In all future years, whenever the same *mũruithia* held an initiation ceremony in his homestead, he had to depart from normal procedure to the extent described below, in imitation of the interrupted ceremony that was forced upon him by circumstances. Moreover, if a son of his became in later life a *mũruithia*, he too had to adopt the variation from normal procedure. This was called *kũruithia na ihoru* (to circumcise in loneliness or sadness).

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In this variation the medicine-man did not come to protect the homestead, set up the saddle quern, or make the magical gateway on the *matuumo* day, as would normally have been the case. After the initiates had been operated upon on the following morning, they were taken straight to the men's hut and kept there in temporary seclusion for one day, and only after that did the medicine-man come and set up the saddle quern and the gateway. The initiates were then symbolically operated upon a second time with a piece of *mũthakwa* wood, and the proper period of seclusion and training began. This fourth day counted as the first day of the seclusion period.

After Training had commenced

If by any mischance some member of the *mũruithia'*s family was taken ill and died suddenly during the period between the time of the initiates' first entering the headquarters hut and the day when they went home, the following procedure had to be adopted.

As soon as the death occurred and the *mũruithia* was informed of it, he summoned a meeting of his two advisers and all the male parents of the initiates who were council elders. He informed them of the death, and the advisers were asked to give the meeting instructions as to what should be done. Recognised custom was that a legal fiction was prepared and the dead person was not regarded as dead at all, but simply as asleep (*E toro*—He is asleep). Then two elders who were not connected with the initiation were sought and instructed to stay with the "sleeping" person night and day until the ceremonies were over. This watch was to prevent a rat or mouse from running over the dead body, an event which would have defiled the whole homestead and brought disaster upon the ceremonies.

A dead man or boy was put to sleep in the men's hut, while a dead girl or woman remained in the hut in which she died, and, as she was legally only "asleep", the ordinary life of the hut was not interrupted in any way. The whole initiation proceedings then went on normally, with no suggestion that anything was amiss, and most people did not know what had happened at all.

When the day for the candidates to go home arrived, however, none them might be anointed with oil, for none of them would be put through the *kũinũkia* ceremony. This was due to the fact that the *inũkia* ceremony involved the slaughter of a ram and ceremonial intercourse on the part of the initiates' parents. If they were to have had this ceremonial intercourse before the dead person had been disposed of and the home had been purged from the blight of death (*hukũra*) it would have been tantamount to performing the *hukũra* ceremony, and they would thus have brought the evil effects of the death upon themselves. Consequently, no initiate in these circumstances went through the *inũkia* ceremony. Later, after the dead person had been disposed of and all the ceremonies connected with that death were over, the initiates each had a goat slaughtered for them as a purification ceremony.

Moreover, no parent of the initiates who was present in the initiation homestead where the death took place might have any sexual intercourse with any person until the death ceremonies were over.

When the initiates had departed on the eighth day, the medicine-man was called in at once, instead of two days later, to take down the magical gateway and to dismantle the saddle quern in order that the homestead might return to normal. The *mũruithia* and his wife and family were also immediately purified of any initiation evils, so that they could lay aside their cloaks of office and become ordinary people. Then it was openly disclosed that the person who had been "asleep" was dead, and the disposal of the body was proceeded with according to custom.

If the Mũruithia Himself Died

If the *mũruithia* died on the *matuumo* day, or the day of the operation, but before the initiates had entered the headquarters hut, the whole initiation ceremony either had to be cancelled, or, if the children had actually been operated upon, postponed for three days, and the initiates placed temporarily in the men's hut. If, however, the *mũruithia* died after the initiates had formally entered the headquarters hut, he was taken to his men's hut and put to "sleep" there with a guard. His place in all subsequent ceremonies then had to be taken by the senior adviser, while the junior adviser took over the directional duties of his senior. Even the ceremonial sex acts with the initiation mother had to be performed by the senior adviser. When the time came for the purification of the *mũruithia* and his wife, the former being "asleep", the adviser was purified in his place. When the initiates were sent home they might not be anointed with oil or undergo the *inũkia* ceremony. The rest of the procedure was as already noted in the above exception.

In subsequent years the initiation mother whose husband had died in these circumstances might call in some senior adviser to act as her (p.661) husband, and with him might arrange and carry through initiation ceremonies exactly as though the adviser was her legal husband, for, far as initiation ceremonies were concerned, her husband was still only asleep and not dead. The sacrificial animals needed in connection with the ceremonies in such a case were provided by the woman, not by the adviser, and she was the chief beneficiary from the fees.

When the Initiation Mother died before the Fourth Day of Seclusion

If the initiation mother was suddenly taken ill, and died at any time after the initiates had been operated upon, up to and including the third day of seclusion, that is, the day of the ceremonial shaving, then the whole initiation ceremonies were at once cancelled. There was no question of simply saying that she was "asleep" and substituting some other woman to act in her place, for no other woman could by custom assume the duties of a mother, nor could any woman perform ceremonial sex acts as a substitute for the woman whose duty it was to perform them.

The death of an initiation mother was, in fact, a catastrophe of the worst posssible kind. As soon as her death occurred, all the initiates were sent forthwith to their own homes, where, however, they could not enter their own mother's hut but had to be lodged temporarily in the men's hut, or the hut of some woman who was past childbearing.

Meanwhile, in the original initiation homestead, the medicine-man had been hastily called in to dismantle the magical gateway, take up the stone, and purify the *mũruithia*, after which the dead woman's body was disposed of in accordance with custom (see Chapter 22).

The initiates that had been sent home remained secluded in their temporary lodgings for a period of anything from a month to six weeks, while the council elders of the whole district made

arrangements for an initiation ceremony to take place in some other homestead. For this new initiation, a few entirely fresh candidates had to be found, and when these had gone through the preliminary *matuumo* ceremonies and were ready to be actually operated upon, all the initiates who had had their initiation interrupted (including the son and daughter of the deceased) were sent to join them on the operation fields, where they were symbolically operated upon again with a piece of *mũthakwa* wood. They then started their seclusion period with the fresh initiates, included among whom were a new senior boy and girl, and this symbolic operation was treated as though it had been the first and real one.

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Death of the Initiation Mother after the Third Day, but before the end of the Ceremony

If it happened that the initiation mother died after two of the four ceremonial sex acts had been performed, and after the initiates had been ceremonially shaved and thus purified of the last vestiges of their "childishness", the remaining ceremonies were all cancelled and the initiates sent home. Here they were secluded either in a men's hut or an old warrior's hut until the ceremonies connected with the woman's death had been completed.

Once this was over, the initiates each had a ram killed for their ceremonial purification, after which they were taken to their own mother's hut. Here the parents of each initiate performed the remaining ceremonial sex acts that night, and on the next night but one after that.

All the other ceremonies, such as going to the *mũkũyũ* tree, going to sleep as guests in another homestead for one night, being ceremonially taught the dances of the warriors, being made to shoot at rats, etc. were omitted altogether.

This fact shows clearly that in the eyes of the Kikuyu it was the ceremonies on the first, second, and third days of the seclusion period, that is, up to and including the ceremonial shaving, that were really important, for they had to do with putting away childish things. The ceremonies on the fourth and subsequent days symbolized the new life which the initiates were now entering, and were less important because the initiates would soon start doing these things in actual fact. Their symbolic performance was desirable, but not essential.

This fact, too, explains why all accounts of the initiation customs that have been obtained are identical up to and including the whole of the third day of seclusion, whereas many minor variations in the ceremonies of the fourth and successive days were described to me, especially as to the order in which the various ceremonies took place. The account that has been given is that which has been most generally given to me as representing the ideal sequence of events on the fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh days, but it is admitted that this procedure was not as universally practised as the account of the ceremonies that took place on the day of the *matuumo* and the first three days of the seclusion and training.

If Human Blood was shed while the Magical Gateway was Erect

It was not by any means a rare occurrence for someone among the (p.663) spectators at an initiation ceremony to start a fight. If human blood drawn either thus or by accident in the initiation homestead, it was a serious matter. The ceremonies were not, however, interrupted in any way. A few council elders took charge of the situation and quickly demanded a ram, which they slaughtered and used to purify the spot where the blood had been shed.

Even if the fight resulted in the death of one of the spectators, the proceedings were not interrupted unless the person killed was a member of the initiation homestead. All that was immediately

necessary was for the ram for purification to be slaughtered by the council elders. The feud started by this death would be carried on elsewhere.

If a Member was killed in a Fight during the Ceremonies

If fighting broke out within the confines of the initiation homestead during the ceremonies, and if as a result some member of the initiation homestead was killed, the whole proceedings of the initiation had to be immediately cancelled. There could be no question of saying that the person was "asleep", when he or she had been killed in full view of all the spectators. The ceremonies having been stopped, all the initiates were sent to their homes where their subsequent treatment depended upon whether or not the third day of the ceremonies had been completed, the procedure in each case being the same, respectively, as if the initiation mother had died (see above).

If Initiate was taken Seriously Ill

Should any initiate be taken seriously ill at any time from the day of the *matuumo* to the day of the *inũkia* ceremonies, his or her parents were asked to take their child home at once, for fear that he or she might die and so bring serious misfortune on all the other initiates. The child was therefore removed from the lodge and carried home. If he or she recovered, subsequent treatment would depend upon whether or not the third day of the seclusion period had been completed. If not, the initiate was sent to some other initiation homestead later to start the ceremonies afresh, otherwise the child merely forewent such ceremonies had been missed, and his or her parents performed the remaining ceremonial sex acts on the child's behalf.

p.664

If the Initiation Mother had a Menstrual Period during the Ceremonies

In spite of the fact that the date for the initiation ceremonies was carefully chosen so as to make sure that the initiation mother would not have a menstrual period at any time from the day of the *matuumo* till the end of the ceremonies, it sometimes happened that the nervous strain and the excitement of the ceremonies caused a woman to have a menstrual period out of her time. Only a few cases of this happening had ever come to the notice of any of the elders I consulted, and they pointed out that the medicine-man who came to protect the homestead by magic always put an anklet of *kĩhĩnga* on the initiation mother's ankle at the opening of the ceremonies expressly to prevent such a happening. It was admitted, however, that such an accident did sometimes occur. The following is an account of the way this emergency would have been met.

The woman would have at once reported what had happened to the *mũruithia* and the whole proceedings would have been suspended until the menses were over. If the initiates had already entered the headquarters hut for the first time, they would have to spend this period in the initiation lodge, but if it happened before the first ceremonial entry of the headquarters hut, they would temporarily be confined to the men's hut. Then, when the woman had become normal once more, the proceedings would have been carried on from the point where they had been left off, and all the subsequent ceremonies would be carried out in the normal way.

If a Female Initiate had a Menstrual Period on the Day of the Matuumo

As we have already seen, Kikuyu custom demanded that a girl be initiated before her first menstrual period, but as we have also seen, sometimes a girl had her first menses before initiation. Although this fact was kept quiet if possible, and although various precautions were taken, such a girl sometimes had another menstrual period on the actual day of the *matuumo* when she was

naked, and when there was no way of preventing her condition from being observed. It was also possible for a girl to have her first menses on the *matuumo* day.

In either case the situation was very unfortunate for the girl concerned, for she had to be taken to her home immediately. On the following (p.665) morning, after all the other candidates for initiation had been publicly operated upon, the operator went to the girl's home, and after receiving a special fee of an extra goat, she operated upon the girl in private. Such a girl then stayed at home and forewent all the normal ceremonies and rites, and this fact affected her adversely all her life. It would be practically impossible for her ever to become the first and senior wife of any man, and before she did eventually marry she would have to go through the special ceremony of purification which was essential for any girl who menstruated before she was a fully qualified adult.

A Menstrual Period after the Operation but before the Seclusion was over

Sometimes a girl initiate had her first menses during the eight days of seclusion and instruction. If this happened she was immediately sent home because her presence in the lodge would defile the other initiates. Such a girl forewent such rites and ceremonies as remained to be performed, but she was not penalised as was a girl who menstruated on the *matuumo* day, and once her companions started the novitiate period she rejoined them and continued to lead a normal life. Nothing prevented her from becoming a first and senior wife, and she would not have to be specially purified before marriage, because she had undergone the actual operation, which was the "outward and visible sign" of initiation, before the menses.

Having now examined in detail the initiation rites and ceremonies of the Kikuyu initiation guild, we must turn to those of the Ũkabi guild.

Ũkabi Guild Initiation Rites

In view of the fact that the word Ũkabi is that by which the Kikuyu commonly refer to the Maasai tribe, it has become customary to speak of the Ũkabi guild as the Maasai guild, and many of those who have not gone into the matter carefully imagine, quite erroneously, that Ũkabi guild initiation ceremonies were based upon those of the Maasai tribe. It is therefore necessary to emphasise straight away that, although the initiation rites of the Ũkabi guild differed markedly from those of the Kikuyu guild, they were nevertheless genuine Kikuyu customs, and not merely adopted Maasai ones.

p.666
It is not at all easy to discover why the word Ũkabi is used in this connection, but it is significant that in the Ũkabi guild ceremonies there was much greater stress laid on the importance of stock than of agricultural produce, and it may be conjectured that the name Ũkabi was applied because of the stress on cattle and sheep, simply because this had affinity with Maasai customs. It was, of course, true that any Kikuyu who went to Maasai country as a child and was initiated there was regarded, if he ever returned to Kikuyu country, as belonging to the Ũkabi initiation guild. This was, however, only a result of the fact that the Maasai were called Ũkabi, and not because Maasai initiation customs, in any way resembled those of the Ũkabi guild. The keynote of the Ũkabi guild customs was a much greater simplicity than those of the Kikuyu guild, and we must now examine in detail the points of divergence between these two guilds.

Preparation for Initiation

In every respect the preparations for initiation of those who were to be initiated according to Ũkabi guild rites were the same as those described for the Kikuyu guild. The candidates of both guilds

danced the ρ re-initiation dances together, the custom of boarding out (*hithia*) children with an initiation host or "father" was the same, the same fees had to be paid for the right to have children initiated, and the right to hold initiation ceremonies in one's own homestead, etc.

We have described the actual initiation ceremonies of the Kikuyu guild as starting in the morning of the *matuumo* ceremonies and ending with the departure of the parents after the actual operation on the following day. The same procedure was followed in the Ũkabi guild. The *matuumo* ceremonies of the Ũkabi guild were, however, quite different from those of the Kikuyu guild, and so were the circumstances in which the operation was carried out.

The Matuumo Day

The dress and ornaments worn by candidates for initiation in the Ũkabi guild differed in no significant respect from those worn by the Kikuyu guild initiates, but the boys did not take their *ndorothi* staves (which they had used for the pre-initiation dances) with them, and (p.667) instead of the *igogo* clubs of the Kikuyu guild boys, they had well-made decorative clubs for dancing.

All the candidates met at the homestead where the initiation ceremonies were to take place, and here they danced for a time in the courtyard. They were then sent out to the entrance area to continue their dancing while the preliminary arrangements were completed as follows.

Unlike the Kikuyu guild ceremonies, those of the Ukabi guild did not necessitate a medicine-man coming on the morning of the *matuumo* to "protect" the village, set up a magical gateway, and a saddle quern. On the other hand, either on the preceding evening or else early in the morning of the *matuumo* day, one did come to put up one or two dry banana leaves which had been rubbed with magic powders so as to ward off evil. He also put an anklet of *mũriĩra* root, knotted many times and smeared with *ira*, on the initiation mother, to prevent her from having a menstrual period.

While the candidates were dancing in the entrance area, some of the young men of the homestead were given a big he-goat by the *mũruithia* (initiation host), which they slaughtered in the courtyard. They handed the skin over to the advisers straight away, and these two set to work to cut it up into strips that would be used later to *ohora* (untie or set free) the male candidates.

The wife of the senior adviser was given a large number of blue beads (not old, hand-made glass beads of the *mũriũngũ* type, but of the type called *mũgathĩ mũirũ*—dark coloured beads, or *mũgathĩ wa ingongona*—beads for the sacrifice), which she proceeded to thread on to a new ram sinew string. This necklace was essential for the ceremonies and had to be made to fit the greatest circumference of the *mũruithia*'s head.

The adviser also fitted a new oxhide strap to a new bottle gourd. This gourd would be used for the ceremonial beer later in the day.

Early in the morning two warriors and two initiated girls had been sent to fetch two big, leafy branches of *mũtamaiyũ*, and two bunches of fir*ewood* from the same tree as that from which these branches were cut. When they arrived back with these things, they did not bring them straight into the courtyard, but hid them for the time being a little way from the entrance, so that at the correct moment they could produce them.

When these preparations were ready, the initiates were summoned into the courtyard again, and lined up in two parallel rows in the order of seniority, which they had to observe from then on. The girls stood behind the boys, and the senior boy and senior girl each had to be near the entrance of the headquarters hut. (In the Kikuyu guild ceremonies (p.668) the order of seniority was not

fixed until much later in the day, after the candidates had come back from the *mũgumo* tree). Now the *mũruithia* and the senior adviser proceeded to put one rawhide strip on the right, hand middle finger of each boy. After this they were given roasted meat joints to eat exactly in the way described for the Kikuyu guild. The girls merely watched this ceremony and had no part in it.

When the ceremonial meat had been eaten, the initiation mother brought some fresh milk mixed with a little water which she had her- self drawn from the river that morning. Then she dipped the ceremonial razor into the milk and water and proceeded to shave her son's head ceremonially, and as soon as she had done this, the various female relatives, not the sponsors, each shaved their own candidate (still standing) with razors they had brought with them, using the milk and water to wet their heads. This shaving was purely ceremonial, for each candidate had been properly shaved earlier in the morning at home, and there was only a little tuft of hair on the crown of the head left to be shaved off now.

As soon as the shaving was over, the *mũruithia* and the senior adviser advanced and gave each candidate a few *ngaita* berries (the fruit of the *mũgaita* shrub) to chew and swallow. This took the place of the porridge (*ngima*) which the candidates in the Kikuyu guild were given. When every candidate had eaten his *ngaita* berries, they were told by the *mũruithia* to go to the *mũgumo* tree. This was merely a figure of speech, for the Ũkabi guild candidates did not go to a *mũgumo* tree at all. Instead, they rushed out into the entrance area, where they found the two warriors and two initiated girls standing holding the two big leafy branches of *mũtamaiyũ*, one man and one girl holding and supporting each branch. The candidates danced round each branch singing the following song, which they had been carefully taught. This was called *gũkũngũĩra mũtamaiyũ*:

Kũngũ ndamaiyũ!	Hail to the olive branches!
Nĩ cia baragu,	They (the boys) belong to the wealthy people,
Ikoina ndamaiyũ,	And they break the olive branches
Mũtĩ mũirũ ũnyuagĩra njau.	From the black tree under which the calves drink.
Ndirĩ mbaru	My ribs are not strong enough
Cia kuuna mũgumo!	For breaking the mũgumo tree!
Nyenjagwo	I am shaved
Na iria;	With milk;
Ndihota ũkũyũ wa mũcangĩro.	I can't cope with wandering round fig trees.(p.669)
Ngũrĩa ngaita,	I will eat *ngaita* berries,
Makĩrĩa ũũmũ.	While they eat *ũũmũ.*

While they were singing this song and dancing round the *mũtamaiyũ* branches, all their female relatives had to come and "redeem" the olive branches from the two warriors and two maidens by each one of them handing over a gourdful of gruel. The candidates were then told to go back into the courtyard in their order of seniority, in two files, one of boys and one of girls, and the *mũtamaiyũ* branches were hidden in the bush nearby until the next day.

In the courtyard the initiates were now all anointed with *ira* powder by the *mũruithia* and his senior adviser. The boys had *ira* rubbed upon their noses, their necks, their navels, and their big toes. The girls were marked with it in a line acoss the forehead from one ear to the other, followed by two perpendicular lines from the line above each eye. They were also marked on the neck, the navel, and the big toes.

Then the *mũruithia*, his wife, the senior adviser, and his wife bowed to the children *cũngĩra* in the same way they did in the Kikuyu guild ceremonies on the *matuumo* day. After this they spat honey

beer over all the candidates just as was done to the candidates of the Kikuyu guild on the *matuumo* day.

The candidates then took up the following song, which was similar to the Kikuyu guild one:

Ndĩgũtiihĩrũo rĩrĩa rĩa njũkĩ	I have been sprayed (or blessed) with the product of the bees
Nderiragĩria!	That I longed for!
Ndirĩ wa nyũkwa	I am not your mother's child
Kwaroka gũkĩa;	When the day breaks tomorrow morning;
Wĩrathanĩre.	The responsibility will be yours.
Wona warĩra,	If you cry,
Iceera rĩa aanake ndũgakinya!	You will never enjoy the companionship of warriors!

Meanwhile, the sponsors of the various candidates started to abuse and curse them calling them, "You dirty little cowards", "You filthy hyenas", "You will cry tomorrow and disgrace us", and any similar remarks that occurred to them to stir their charges to fury and make them all the more determined to show how wrong the sponsors' estimates of them were.

When the dancing was over all the candidates were sent to their homes, where they were fed. They then spent the rest of the night dancing as the Kikuyu guild initiates did. After the candidates had (p.670) departed for their homes, the initiation mother went to the river and drew water, which she brought home and poured into an earthenware pot into which she had put an axe head. This pot was then put under the eaves on the side of the hut where the girls' bedroom was. As soon as the candidates had departed, the *mũruithia* and his advisers went into the headquarters hut and proceeded to fill up the new gourd with honey beer from the special *ndua* gourd that had been set to brew on the previous day. After putting it into the new gourd, they drank a little of the beer in order to bless themselves. The advisers then went home.

The headquarters hut was the scene of dancing and singing all night, to cheer up the senior candidates who were the children of that hut.

During the *matuumo* day some members of the family had been preparing sugar-cane beer for the following day.

The Day of the Operation

Early in the morning of the day of the operation, before it was light, each candidate was blessed by his parents, had most of his or her ornaments removed, and was sent off to the initiation village exactly as in the case of the Kikuyu guild candidates. Having arrived at the homestead where they were to assemble, the candidates danced and sang the following song:

Ĩ-hũ-yũ! Nyumire mũciĩ	*Ĩ hũ-yũ!* I left home
Kana ngeithanirie	Nor greeted anyone
Mũhĩrĩga	At the entrance
Ruoro rũgĩtema.	When the dawn broke.
Mũthuuri mũkũrũ!	Oh, Senior elder!
Temania na rũu.	Cut people with the sunrise.

When all the candidates had assembled they were sent down to the stream to bathe to the sound of a *coro* war horn. The bathing was done in the same way as in the Kikuyu guild ceremonies, but afterwards, instead of going to a grassy field for the operation, they marched back to the initiation homestead again, each making the *thano* sign (the thumb between the index and middle finger, with all the fingers folded) with both hands to ward off the evil eye. Meanwhile, at the initiation

homestead, preparations for the day's ceremonies had been going on since before dawn. These differed greatly from those of the Kikuyu initiation guild and were as follows.

p.671
Before dawn, the *mũruithia* and his advisers took the special wild olive wood fuel that had been cut on the previous day and lit an enormous fire with it in the centre of the courtyard. More wild olive wood was brought by every parent of the candidates when they escorted their children to the homestead early in the morning, and this fuel was added to the fire. While the candidates were at the river the fire burned fiercely, and before they returned it had burned down to ashes and was ready to be encircled with a wall of cow dung as described below.

Meanwhile, having lit the fire, the advisers went out and brought into the courtyard the *mũtamaiyũ* branches that had been danced round and hidden on the previous day, and they leaned these up against the headquarters hut temporarily. They then prepared a hole in the thatch above the right-hand side of the doorway, and thrust the branches through this hole. They were bound to the right-hand door post with the leather carrying strap of the woman who owned the headquarters hut, the top leafy branches projecting out through the thatch. These branches were then liberally rubbed over with *ira* powder, and a little honey beer was poured over them to bless and purify them. By the time this had been done, the fire had burnt sufficiently low to be approachable, and the wives of the advisers, with one or two other women to help them, went to the cattle enclosure and brought basketfuls of fresh cattle dung, with which they built a low wall about 8in. high round the fire and about 4ft from it. Two gaps were left in this wall, one facing the door of the headquarters hut and one facing the homestead entrance. By the time this wall was finished, the candidates for initiation were on their way back from the river, and everything was ready for the actual operations, which were carried out as follows.

The Actual Operation

As soon as the candidates arrived back at the entrance to the homestead they were lined up just inside the courtyard. The initiation mother then came with the pot of water with the axe head in it, and she used this water, which was very cold, to wash each candidate herself ceremonially. She stood in front of him or her, dipping her cupped hands into the water, and splashing some of it over the genitalia and some over the face and chest. This served the double purpose of ceremonially washing, and of chilling the genitalia so as to make them numb. This done, she brought out an oxhide bed mat from her own bed and put (p.672) it on the ground by the granaries, to the right of the entrance to the homestead, with the hairy side downwards. This hide had to be the skin of a male animal that had been slaughtered, not the skin of an animal that had died a natural death.

The senior male candidate and the next three candidates in order of seniority sat down on this hide, with their sponsors behind them to support them. The boys had no bunch of leaves to sit upon, and did not dig their heels into the ground.

The operator then came and circumcised them in the same way as the Kikuyu guild candidates; in fact, the same operators did the operations for both guilds. When all four boys on the skin had been circumcised, each one had his *ngũnyi* belt taken from him by his sponsor who handed it to a small brother or cousin. Then the sponsor put a new skin cloak on his charge and a pair of new sandals. The four boys got up and stood a little way off while the next four boys were similarly circumcised, and so on until all the boys had been operated upon.

The oxhide on which the boys had been sitting for their operation was now folded up and taken away by the initiation mother, and she brought out another one, also from her bed. This she put down a little to the right of where the first one had been, and then the first four senior girls came and took their places upon it, and all the men spectators moved away and made room for women and girls, for no male might watch the operation. Each girl had two supporters as in the Kikuyu guild ceremonies. However, in this ceremony, the girls were not operated upon until after the boys, instead of its being done at the same time. Once the first four had had the operation their sponsors put new skin cloaks on them, but they were not given sandals. They were then made to stand up and move away a little, while the next four were operated upon, and so on until all the girls were finished.

The skin they sat upon was then also removed, and both the skins were taken by the initiation mother just as they were—covered with blood—and put back on her bed.

The Ceremony of entering the Headquarters Hut

Once all the candidates, male and female, had been operated upon» they were seized from behind by their sponsors in the order of their seniority in the following manner. The sponsor, standing behind hi[s] charge, passed his left arm under the initiate's left armpit and round his chest, thus gripping him firmly. His right arm was then half over the initiate's right shoulder and his right hand was clapped over the (p.673) initiate's eyes to blindfold him. The sponsor then started walking backwards dragging his charge with him, all the time looking over his right shoulder to see where he was going. This was called *gũthiĩ na kĩhutatĩ* (to go backwards). The initiate was led thus round the right-hand side of the fire in a counter-clockwise direction, walking between it and the dung wall, going in through the gap facing the entrance, and out through the gap facing the headquarters hut. When they reached the headquarters hut they entered it, still moving backwards. Once inside the hut, the initiate's eyes were uncovered and he sat down by the entrance to the woman's bed. The other male initiates followed in the same way, and then the girls were brought in in their turn until all the initiates were seated in the headquarters hut. The *mũruithia* and his wife were already in the hut. All the sponsors, except those of the senior girl and senior boy, then went out, and some of the warriors of the homestead were ordered to seize and bleed two animals, a young uncastrated bull that was not yet mature, and a young heifer.

The blood of these two animals was caught in two half-gourds and kept separate. It was then brought into the headquarters hut in order that each initiate might drink of it ceremonially. Every boy swallowed a little of the bull's blood, but the girls merely dipped their fingers in the heifer's blood and rubbed it on their throats, thus drinking it symbolically. Having thus ceremonially entered the initiation mother's hut and drunk the blood, the initiates were directed to file out again, still in order of seniority, all the boys first and then all the girls. This time they walked unsupported, and face first, not backwards, and they went back by the same way they had come, past the fire and between it and the dung wall, on the same side as before.

Having thus passed the fire, they were taken behind the headquarters hut, where they sat down so that the operators, male and female, could inspect the wounds, and if necessary cut away little bits of ragged flesh or skin.

The operators then demanded butterfat (*ngorono*) and they anointed the wounds with this and *mũkengeria* juice instead of the castor oil used in the Kikuyu guild ceremonies.

The initiates were then left in the charge of their sponsors, who attended to the wounds further, and, in the case of the girls, put *kagutuĩ* leaves between the *labia*. They did not however, use *mũgumo* barks an astringent. While the initiates were thus being looked after, the *mũruithia* came and sat down on his ceremonial stool in the middle of the courtyard, and his wife proceeded to shave a little hair off his head on either side of his temples and above his ears. She herself was then similarly shaved by the senior adviser's wife. Then the senior (p.674) adviser approached the *mũruithia*, and with due ceremony placed a blue bead necklace on his head so that it was encircled from the forehead to the occipital bone. Then the senior adviser fetched a wisp of Kikuyu grass (*nyeki ya kĩgombe*) and put this into the mouth of the bottle gourd to which a strap handle had been sewn on the previous day He handed this to the *mũruithia*, who got up from his seat and walked solemnly into the headquarters hut, followed by his wife, and by the two advisers and their wives.

At this point the initiates were summoned, and having formed up in one long file in the order of their seniority, all the boys first and then all the girls, they were directed to enter the headquarters hut by way of the fire. They entered the cattle dung ring by the gap on the *thome* (entrance area) side, and this time passed by in a clockwise direction on the left of the fire so that it was on their right-hand side, and so out at the other gap into the headquarters hut. Here they found that a large cooking pot with some water was on the fire, while on the bed had been heaped a very large pile of *muondwe* leaves.

The Ceremony of washing the Initiates

When all the initiates had entered the hut, the female advisers placed three large half-gourds outside the door of the hut for the "washing" fees to be put in. Then the senior male initiate was told to climb on to his mother's bed, and here the two female advisers took off his cloak and his sandals, washed him all over with warm water, and wiped him with some of the *muondwe* leaves. His cloak and sandals were then put on him again and he left the bed and sat down in a corner of the hut. Then the next senior boy climbed on to the bed and the female advisers called out that his mother was to place her fee in one of the half-gourds outside the door. Until and unless she brought her fee, they refused to wash the initiate and the proceedings were held up· If the woman had forgotten to bring the fee she had to place some ornament in the half-gourd as a token payment to be redeemed later. Every male, and then every female initiate, was washed in this way on the initiation mother's bed. The fees payable were a small quantity of castor oil berries, some bulrush millet grain, or some *njahĩ* beans, and the whole of these fees went to the female advisers, and were spoken of as *ihakĩ rĩa gũthambania* (the fee for washing people). Once all the initiates had been duly washed, they were told to file out of the hut again, and go past the fire on the same side as that by which they had come the second time. Then they went to the place at the back of the (p.675) headquarters hut, where they had their wounds attended to, were given food to break their fast, and were allowed to rest.

Anointing the Mũruithia and His Wife

The following ceremony then took place inside the headquarters hut. first the *mũruithia* and his advisers each took a little honey beer and spat on to their chests "to bless themselves". Then the *mũruithia* and his wife sat down on stools and the male advisers rubbed butterfat on the head of the *mũruithia*, after which they took some of the honey scum (*ngũmbĩ*) from the top of the large brewing vessel (*ndua*) containing the ceremonial honey beer, and put this in a little pile on the middle of his head so that honey beer trickled down over his face and neck. They then turned their attention to his wife, and anointed her head twice with butterfat, and once with honey scum.

When this ceremony had been performed, the honey beer in the *ndua ya mũrũngũ* was poured off into the special bottle gourd, and each of the men (the *mũruithia* and his two advisers) drank from the mouth of this bottle gourd twice; the first mouthful they spat on to their chests, the second they swallowed.

Anointing and Blessing the Initiates' Parents

The whole party that was in the headquarters hut then filed out into the courtyard again and sat down on their ceremonial stools. The parents of all the initiates then lined up, and husband and wife together, two by two, came to the *mũruithia* and his wife to be blessed and anointed with butterfat. The *mũruithia* anointed each initiate's father on the head and neck with butterfat, and his wife did the same to each initiate's mother.

Each initiate's father was then handed the bottle gourd of ceremonial honey beer, and he drank from it twice, spitting the first mouthful on to his chest and swallowing the second. As soon as each couple had thus been blessed they went off without a word, and were not allowed to speak to each other or to anyone whom they met until they had reached home, entered their own hut, and emerged again. They hurried away because at the home of each man who had boarded out a child, beer had been prepared for a feast, and they had to go back to preside at this feast, which could not start until they were there.

p.676
As soon as every pair of initiate's parents had been anointed and had departed, the *mũruithia* called for the beer that he himself had brewed for a feast in honour of his own children, the senior initiates It was brought out and he proceeded to drink it in accordance with recognised custom (see Chapter 8).

The remainder of the day was devoted to a beer drink which was called *njohi ya mbato ya ciana* (hospitality on behalf of his children). It was not accompanied by a feast.

In the late afternoon of that day, the *mũruithia* handed over the *mathemba* offerings (presents of food brought by relatives) and the boarding fees of one male initiate to each of his two male advisers. He gave the same, but of a female initiate, to each of the two female advisers. These they sent to their own homes. He also gave the man and the women who had been the sponsors of his own son and daughter the *mathemba* offerings of a male and a female initiate, respectively. During the beer drinking the wall of cow dung was completely trodden down, but this did not matter as it had served its purpose and was no longer required.

The Igongona or Sacrifice on the Day of the Operation

The beer feast went on until nightfall, when all the guests departed. The *mũruithia* and his wife then went into the hut and sat down. The initiates were summoned, filed into the hut in the order of their seniority, and sat down on the floor.

The advisers then came in, and took the bottle gourd from the *mũruithia*. They drank what beer was left in it, and then handed it back to him, and told him to hang it at the head of his wife's bed for the night.

The advisers and the *mũruithia* then proceeded to mix honey with water and put *mtratina* fruits into it to brew some fresh ceremonial honey beer in the special *ndua* for the ceremonies of the following day. During the feasting on this day some sugar-cane beer had been kept back from the guests, and this was now taken out into the courtyard where all the sponsors were sitting by a fire.

Then, before the *mũruithia* and his advisers went out to join them, the latter approached the former, and with great ceremony, they pushed the blue bead necklace from his head down on to his neck. This was a very sacred ceremony and it was done in darkness so that the initiates could not see what was being done. It was an *igongona* (sacrifice), and took the place in the Ũkabi guild of the act of ceremonial sexual intercourse.

p.677
With the necklace on his neck, the *mũruithia* and his advisers then went out into the courtyard and drank beer with the sponsors, who only sipped a little as they were not really old enough to drink beer. This was called *njohi ya kũrutũrũra atiiri* (beer for sending away the sponsors). The sponsors then went to their own homes, for they did not sleep at the at the initiation homestead as they did in the Kikuyu guild custom. After the sponsors had departed, the advisers escorted the *mũruithia* to the headquarters hut, which he entered with his wife. They went to their bed and slept there, but they did not and might not have any sexual contact by Ũkabi guild custom. The initiates did not have any lodge built for them, but slept on the floor of the headquarters hut.

The advisers, having seen the man and his wife into the hut, went home themselves, for they, like the sponsors, did not sleep in the initiation homestead.

The Day after the Operation

The first thing that happened early on the following morning was that the *mũruithia's* wife put his necklace of blue beads back on to his head again. He then went out followed by the initiates in the order of their seniority. The initiates sat about warming themselves in the sun until such time as all the preparations for the day's ceremonies were completed.

First of all the advisers arrived from their own homes, and they and the *mũruithia* ceremonially drove the flocks of the homestead out to graze. While doing this, they carried the bottle gourd of ceremonial beer and all their insignia of office. The reason for this ceremony was to bless the flocks, so that when, later in the day, they were symbolically raided by the male initiates, the blessing might pass on to them. This was called *kuumagaria mbũri* (escorting the flocks).

The first two male sponsors to arrive were sent off to get stems of *mũrangarĩ* and *mũkarakinga* wood, and from this wood each male sponsor proceeded to make a bow stave for his charge. They also set to work to make three arrows for each of their charges. Two of these had to be of the type called *ndiiri* or *ndiringũ*, which were made as follows. From a piece of *mũtamaiyũ* wood a shaft about 20in. long was carefully cut. To one end of this was fitted a disc of leather about 1½in. in diameter. This was pushed down so that it was about ½in. down the head end of the shaft. Beeswax was then softened in the hand and (p.678) moulded over the top of the disc all round the projecting point of the arrow, till a kind of mushroom shaped lump was made. At the opposite end of the shaft a notch was cut and the *ndiringũ* was ready.

The third arrow was also made of *mũtamaiyũ* wood, and the shaft and head were all carved in one piece with a false neck or foreshaft. A disc of leather was fitted over the point of the arrow about 1in. from the end, but it was not covered with beeswax. The bows were strung with twisted sinew string specially provided by each male initiate's father.

While the male sponsors were engaged thus, the female sponsors assisted by female relatives of the male initiates, were busy preparing twisted string from the fibre of the wild sisal plant called *ndibai*. This had been specially collected from the country bordering. Maasai territory, where it

grew plentifully. With this string they proceeded to plait special head ornaments (*marithiani*) in which a core of *mũriĩra* root was used with the *ndibai* string.

While all this was going on, some of the warriors of the initiation homestead had been given a ram to slaughter by the *mũruithia*, and as soon as it had been killed and skinned the sponsors and the *mũruithia* took its hide and cut strips (*ngwaro*) from the legs and shoulders. These they put into a half-gourd with some of the stomach contents (*taatha*) and set to one side until required.

The Ceremony of Gũtonyũo Matũ (*Ear Piercing*)

When all these preliminary preparations had been made, the initiates were summoned and formed up in the order of their seniority, with the seniors near the entrance to the headquarters hut. The *mũruithia* and the senior adviser then came with two iron awls (one each) and with stems of *mũkengeria*, and proceeded to pass these through the distended ear-lobes of each initiate, male and female, thus symbolically piercing their ears. Then they took from the sponsor of each initiate an iron or brass wrist ornament (which took the place of the iron earrings—*ngunju*—used in the Kikuyu guild ceremony), and put these wrist ornaments in one or the other ear of each initiate. The advisers brought the half-gourd containing the *ngwaro* strips, and the *mũruithia* and his wife, and the senior adviser and his wife, took some beer from the bottle gourd of ceremonial beer, and all together spat this beer on the strips and blessed them.

This done, the *mũruithia* and the senior advisers put one of these strips on the right leg of each male initiate just above the knee, and (p.679) one on the left arm of each female initiate above the elbow. Then they fastened the *marithiani* head ornaments round the crowns of the heads of each initiate, male and female. The boys' *marithiani* were distinguished by an ostrich feather on either side over the ear, projecting backwards. The girls' *marithiani* each had a number of cowrie shells, provided by their own mothers, attached to them over the forehead. Each male initiate was now approached by his sponsor, who took off his own sword belt and fastened it on his charge's waist. He also handed him the special bow and arrows prepared for him, thus arraying him for the symbolic raid that was to take place in the afternoon. The girl initiates were each given a little string bag with a small gourd bottle of castor oil in it, which they were to use to anoint their wounds.

The Symbolic Killing of Maasai Enemies

As soon as the boys had all been armed, a few of the warriors went out and caught bees, which they carefully wrapped up alive in leaves and placed in an open space in the entrance area. These bees represented Maasai warriors. When they were ready, two of the male initiates were chosen as spies (*athigani*), and were told to spy out the land and find the enemy encampment. They had been told what to look for, and as soon as they found the bundles of leaves containing the bees, they hastened back and called out to their companions (the other male initiates) to come for the attack.

They then all rushed out, led by the spies, stood over the bundles containing the bees, and shot them with their arrows in the same way that the Kikuyu guild initiates shot at the dead rats and mice. Those who hit the leafy bundles "killed" a Maasai, and would presently sing the song appropriate to warriors who had killed an enemy, while the others would only sing the cattle raiding song.

While the boys were shooting at the bees, the girl initiates were taken to a nearby cultivation plot, which they symbolically weeded and planted. They did not, however, go to get little bundles of firewood as the Kikuyu guild girl initiates did. Instead, on this day, each of their mothers had to

bring three or four pieces of *mũtamaiyũ* firewood on behalf of their daughters. When the girls had come back from the garden and the boys had "killed the Maasai", the girls waited in the courtyard with their mothers and the boy initiates' mothers, while the boy initiates were sent off to raid cattle. The flocks and herds of homestead had been brought to the outskirts of the village, and (p.680) the boys now went off to raid the herds, and drive the herdsmen off They then drove home the raided stock in triumph.

As they approached, all the women and girl initiates started to ululate with *ngemi,* and the boys, led by their sponsors, sang the "songs of cattle" and the "songs of men", as did the Kikuyu guild initiates though the Kikuyu guild initiates did so several days later in the proceedings.

The raided cattle were then given saline earth by the women of the homestead, and the male initiates all went to the headquarters hut to hand over their swords and bows and arrows to their mother (that is the initiation mother) to symbolize their return home from a successful raid. The initiation mother handed back the swords to the sponsors from whom they had been borrowed, but she took the bows and arrows into the headquarters hut. The initiates, male and female, then went into the hut themselves.

Now the *mũruithia* took a roasted foreleg and a roasted half-saddle joint of the slaughtered ram, and cut each joint up into little bits, putting them into two separate half-gourds. These, and a special piece for the initiation mother, were sent into the headquarters hut. First she ate her bit, and then gave the female initiates the half-gourd with pieces of meat from the foreleg, and the boys the one with the pieces from the half-saddle joint. Those who for any reason did not wish to eat their piece of meat rubbed it on their throats and so ate it symbolically.

Out in the courtyard the *mũruithia* and his advisers ate the roasted joints, sharing them with anyone else they wished.

Throughout this day the *mũruithia* and the advisers had carried the bottle gourd of *mũrũngũ* beer about with them to drink from when they wished. That evening they prepared a fresh brew for the following day, and then, when the advisers had gone home, the *mũruithia* and his wife performed the ceremony of putting the necklace from his head on to his neck. Again they slept in the hut with all the initiates, but no sex act took place, for the ceremony with the bead necklace took its place in the Ũkabi guild initiation rites.

The Third Day

On the third day of the post-initiation ceremonies (counting the day oi the operation as the first day), early in the morning, the *mũruithia*'s (p.681) wife again put the blue bead necklace on his head. Then the initiates went out into the courtyard to await the arrival of their friends and relatives for the only ceremony of the day, that of removing the wrist ornaments that had been put into their ears on the preceding day, and substituting instead women's coiled brass ear ornaments for the boys and rolled wads of leather for the girls. This removal of wristlets and insertion of the other objects was carried out by the *mũruithia* and his wife, and the senior adviser and his wife, and the brass earrings and bits of leather were brought by the initiates' mothers. This ceremony corresponded to the one of putting wooden ear plugs into the ears of the Kikuyu guild initiates. The Ũkabi guild initiates did not get wooden ear plugs until a much later date, when they returned to the initiation homestead for the second stage of the ceremonies.

The remainder of the third day was spent by the initiates in eating and shooting at birds with their bows and arrows, which had been handed to them by the initiation mother in the morning when

they left her hut. Any birds which they shot, the male initiates proceeded to skin, and they tied the skins on to their *marithiani* head-dresses; each boy tried to get at least one bird skin on this day, to which others would be added in the days of the novitiate.

If the male initiates saw any person whom they thought might give them an ornament, they shot at him with their mushroom-ended arrows. Any person who was hit, had to hand over to the initiate some small ornament or a few beads. The girl initiates of the Ũkabi guild had the right to demand a present, on the third day, from any person whose clothing they seized hold of with one hand.

The head and the ventral sac of the rumen (*mũromo wa ihu*) from the joints boiled on the previous day had been laid aside. These were now produced and the *mũruitkia* and his advisers ate the latter, while the head was given to the women to eat (which was an Ũkabi guild special custom). Having cut it up, however, the women handed the tongue and a piece of the lower jaw back to the *mũruithia*.

In the morning the *mũruithia* took that part of the skin of the ram sacrificed on the previous day that had been left over after cutting off the *ngwaro* strips, and he pegged it out to dry in front of the headquarters hut. In the late afternoon this piece of skin was cut in half after all its hair and wool had been scraped off and it had been made and smooth. The *miruithia* then cut little squares from the right-hand piece of skin. These were sewn into the corners of the cloaks of the male initiates, while similar bits from the left half of the skin were sewn into the girls' cloaks.

p.682
That night, when the initiates had all entered the headquarters hut again and had handed over the bows and arrows of the boys and the bags and oil bottles of the girls to the initiation mother, the senior adviser put the blue bead necklace from the *mũruithia* head on to his neck, thus performing the "sacrifice" once more.

The Fourth Day

In the initiation ceremonies of the Ũkabi guild the whole period from the day of the· *matuumo* to the end of the ceremonies was nine days, as it was in the Kikuyu guild, but there was an interruption of anything from four to six weeks in the middle, during which the initiates went home, joined in the life of the novices, and mixed with the Kikuyu guild initiates of their district for the novitiate dancing of the *waine*. Then, when the Kikuyu guild initiates performed the ceremony of purification by rape (see next chapter), those of the Ũkabi guild went back to the initiation homestead for four more days of training, which ended their novitiate period.

On the fourth day after the *matuumo*, therefore, the Ũkabi guild initiates went to their own homes, and the following ceremonies were performed. Very early in the morning, before it was really light, the parents of each initiate who had been boarded out sent a warrior to meet their child and escort him or her home. Occasionally a boy and girl were sent instead of a warrior as in Kikuyu guild custom, but within the Ũkabi guild this was not regarded as necessary. In the morning, before the initiates were sent home, each was given his or her belongings by the initiation mother and was then anointed with mutton fat, instead of castor oil, as was the case in the corresponding Kikuyu guild ceremony.

On this day, at the home of each initiate, a ram was slaughtered early in the morning, this being called *ndũrũme ya kũguraria* (a ram to seal the contract). As soon as it had been killed its blood was drawn off into a small new half-gourd and put to one side, while some of the fat was quickly rendered down and a rawhide strip cut from the skin. Should the initiate arrive home before these

preparations were completed, he or she had to wait outside in the entrance area until all was ready. Then the initiate entered the courtyard, carrying his bow arrows (or if a girl with her string bag and oil bottle), and stood in front of the door of his or her own mother's hut. The parents approached (p.683), and first the mother removed the rawhide strip put on the initiate on the second day at the initiation homestead. In its place the father put the new strip from the ram just slaughtered. The old one was taken by the mother, put into an earthenware jar, and carefully kept until the day when the initiate had to go back again to the initiation homestead for the concluding ceremonies. After putting on the new strip, the father and mother stood in front of the initiate, and the father rubbed *ira* powder on the boy or girl in the same way as described earlier. Then the mother took some of the mutton fat rendered down from the animal slaughtered that morning and anointed the initiate with it. This done, she took the bow and arrows (or the string bag and oil bottle) from the initiate and carried them into her hut to hang them up. The initiate followed her into the hut and sat down on a brand-new stool specially provided. When the initiate was seated, one of the other women of the homestead brought in the half-gourd containing the blood of the ram. She handed this to the mother, who passed it to the initiate for the boy to drink some, and for the girl, to rub some on her throat and lick a little with the tip of her tongue. This drinking of blood was an essential part of the Ũkabi guild ceremonies, and one to which great importance was attached.

Meanwhile, out in the courtyard, the father took either a roasted foreleg or a half-saddle joint, according to whether the initiate was a girl or a boy, and cut five pieces from the latter for a boy or four from the former for a girl. These bits of meat, together with larger pieces for the mother, were put into a half-gourd and taken into the hut, where the initiate and the mother partook of this ceremonial feast.

That night the father had to sleep in the same hut as the initiate and his mother, but the parents might on no account have any sexual contact; in fact, both of them had to be absolutely continent until after the initiates had been back to the initiation homestead for the final ceremonies and had come home again the second time (see next chapter). On the following day, the initiates of the Ũkabi guild entered the novitiate stage, and for this they joined forces with the Kikuyu guild initiates.

Exceptions to the Normal Initiation Procedure of the Ũkabi Guild

In our examination of the Kikuyu guild ceremonies we noted a series (p.684) of exceptions to the normal customs due to accidents, such as death**.** Similar accidents were equally liable to interfere with the Ũkabi guild ceremonies, and we must briefly examine the nature of these exceptions

A Death on the Day of Matuumo

As in the case of the Kikuyu-guild ceremonies, any death on the *matuumo* day in the initiation homestead caused the whole of the ceremonies to be abandoned, and the candidates to be sent home. After the lapse of one month, new ceremonies were instituted in some other homestead.

Death after the Operation had taken place

In the Ũkabi guild ceremonies, once the candidates had been operated upon, even if they had not yet entered the headquarters hut, they were regarded as already well on the way to initiation, and so the ceremonies were not postponed at all, but instead the dead person was treated as though asleep until the fourth day was reached and the initiates had gone to their homes. Then the body was disposed of and all the necessary ceremonies performed before the initiates returned for the

second half of the ceremonies, which would be slightly different, as will be described in the next chapter.

If the Mũruithia Died after the Operation

If by any chance the *mũruithia* died during the time between the operation and the morning of the fourth day, he was treated as though asleep and his place was taken in all ceremonies by the senior male adviser. The initiates were sent home as usual, but they did not come back to the initiation homestead for the second part of the ceremonies. Instead, this second series of ceremonies was performed for each initiate at his or her own home.

If the Initiation Mother Died

If at any period in the ceremonies the initiation mother died, her place could not be taken by anyone else, and so the whole of the ceremonies abruptly ceased. If the ceremonies had only just begun before the (p.685) death, a new initiation ceremony had to be started at some other homestead. The initiates had to be symbolically operated upon again, and then went through the ceremonies afresh. If, however, she died after the third day, the ceremonies were completed at each initiate's own home.

If the Initiation Mother Menstruated during the Period of the Ceremonies

Within the Ũkabi guild it was not regarded as serious if the initiation mother had a menstrual period, for she did not have ceremonial sex acts to perform like the Kikuyu guild members. If, therefore, such an accident happened, there was no postponement of the ceremonies at all, but the menstruating woman did not touch any of the ceremonial objects while in this condition and her place in the ceremonies, such as anointing the initiates with fat, or taking their bows from them, was taken by the senior female adviser. In this, therefore, those of the Ũkabi guild differed markedly from those of the Kikuyu guild.

If One of the Female Initiates Menstruated during the Ceremonies

In the Ũkabi guild menstruation was not regarded as such an unclean thing as it was within the Kikuyu guild, and if a girl candidate or initiate had her first menses during the ceremonies, she merely remained in the headquarters hut and did not come out and share in the daytime ceremonies. She was not, therefore, sent home or disgraced in any way, and apart from the parents, the advisers, the *mũruithia*, and his wife, no one knew what had happened. After all the ceremonies were over her father had, however, to send a very fat ram to the *mũruithia* to be slaughtered in purification of the hut which his child's blood had defiled.

Violent Death of a Member of the Initiation Homestead

In the Ũkabi guild, even a person killed by violence in the homestead did not cause the ceremonies to be abandoned once the initiates had actually been operated upon. Such a person was said to be "asleep", and the ceremonies were completed up to the end of the fourth day. During the interval before the second stage of the ceremonies was resumed, the body was disposed of, and the ceremonies were completed in the normal way.

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Circumcision without Initiation

It sometimes happened among the Kikuyu that a boy playing with his genitalia pulled the foreskin back and exposed the whole of the *glans penis*, or else during an erection in a dream, the foreskin

got drawn back and exposed it. In either case the boy was said to have been "circumcised by the spirits" (*kũruithio nĩ ngoma*), and on the next day an operator was sent for and the boy had the foreskin cut in the correct way and was circumcised properly. A boy so circumcised out of season and before he was old enough for initiation did not then become a warrior, but retained the status of an uncircumcised boy (*kĩhĩĩ*) until such time as the other boys of his age were regarded as ready for initiation. Then, on the day when they were all operated upon, either by Ũkabi or Kikuyu rites, he was symbolically re-operated upon with a piece of *mũthakwa* wood, thus becoming one of the group, and went through all the ceremonies with his companions.

The details of the second half of the ceremonies performed by the Ũkabi guild will be given in the next chapter, because, although they were in some ways part of the initiation ceremonies rather than the novitiate ceremonies they nevertheless did not take place until the end of the novitiate.

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Introduction

Just as in dealing with initiation ceremonies, so now with regard to the period of the novitiate, we shall have to consider the customs followed by the Kikuyu and the Ũkabi initiation guilds separately. Although the initiates of both guilds in a single district mixed and danced the *waine* dance together during this time, their customs, especially those which brought the novitiate to a close, were entirely different. At this stage of their lives, the initiates were called *ciumĩri* (singular *kiumĩri*), which means literally, "those who have come out"—debutantes, in fact. For practical purposes they were regarded temporarily as sexless, for they were not yet men and women, yet they had ceased to be boys and girls.

The Novice Stage of the Kikuyu Guild

The Duration of the Novitiate

From the day after the return of the initiates to their own homes they ceased to be *irui* and became *ciumĩrĩ*, the length of time which the individual spent as a *kiumĩri* depending entirely upon circumstances. In any given territorial area, the *gũthiga* ceremonies, which brought the novitiate to an end, could not take place until every candidate for initiation that year had been duly initiated. Once the last lot of candidates for initiation in a territorial unit (*rũgongo*) had been initiated, at least a month had to elapse before they could perform the ceremony of *gũthiga*, which brought the novitiate to an end. Thus, those candidates initiated early in the season were novices for a much longer period than the more recent novitiates. After this period they were all told that the time had come for them to *thiga*, that is, to pass out of the novitiate and become adult members of the community. Male novices belonging to the Kikuyu initiation guild were then all sent off to perform the ceremony of *kwĩhaka mũũnyũ* (literally, to smear oneself ^th white, saline earth), their last ceremony before they could *thiga*.

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Occupations during the Novitiate

During the novitiate the novices spent their days wandering about in bands, wearing the special cloaks that they had been given after the operation, carrying three or four light wands called *mĩcee*, and dancing the *waine* dance. When they were tired of the *waine* dance, they practised the dances of the warriors and maidens, so as to attain reasonable proficiency in the steps and songs of these before they became fully acknowledged as adults. Whenever those who were already novices heard of a *matuumo* ceremony anywhere in the vicinity, they went there and danced the *waine* dance on the outskirts of the crowd, and took the opportunity of people being assembled in holiday mood to try to get further contributions to their collections of ornaments and beads.

Male novices were not allowed to go near any warrior, and if they saw one coming along a path on which they themselves were travelling, they had to go into the bush until the warrior had passed by. The female novices, on the other hand, were entitled to meet the warriors, and it was usual for the latter to use the *ũũmbani* (love-making) formula of "*Tuohere nyeki*" (Tie grass for us), to which the girls would answer, "*Twohera*" (We tie it for . . .), naming one of the warriors. This was the formula for making a lover's appointment, but was purely by way of a joke, in this case, for until they had passed out of the novice stage, none of these girls could, in fact, have sexual contact with anyone, even of the restricted *nguĩko* type (see next chapter). The warriors, however, made use of these opportunities to get to know the newly initiated girls, so that when the girls became fully initiated *airĩtu* later on, they would be in a position to woo them for lovers.

Every female novice had to sleep at night in her own mother's hut and under her care, and in the evenings she was given instruction on the laws of behaviour she would have to observe as an unmarried, initiated girl. The male novices, however, were permitted to go and sleep in the homes of their companions, where they shared in any instruction that was given to their host by his father that night.

It was absolutely taboo for any person to hit or strike a novice, and the taboo applied equally to the novices themselves as far as drawing blood was concerned. If any person did draw blood—even by a slight grazing of the skin—from a novice, he had to once to pay a fine of a ram in order to purify the novice. This was called *ndũrũme ya kũhoria thakame* (a ram to cool down the blood, i.e. to ward off evil influences that could occur because of it). It was not uncommon for the novices to (p.689) fight each other with sticks and fists in connection with the *waine* dance Chapter 11), but they were always warned in advance to take care not to draw blood. Accidents, however, often happened, in which case the father of the novice who drew blood from another had to provide the ram for the purification ceremony.

(In connection with this purification ceremony, which will be dealt with in detail in Chapter 28, it is important to note that the novices did not have a rawhide strip put on their fingers or wrists as they would have had had they not been novices.)

It must also be noted that it was considered very wrong indeed for people who belonged to the same initiation age-group, and had attended the initiation ceremonies at the same initiation lodge, to draw blood from each other. If they did so in later life, after reaching the stage of warriors, they had to undergo a very special purification ceremony, which involved their each having seven rawhide strips put on their wrists and then being further purified by a medicine-man. (see Chapter 28).

The fear of blood during the novice stage is further exemplified in the customs connected with the menstruation of a girl novice. As we have already seen, girls were supposed to be initiated well before puberty in order that they might be fully qualified *airĩtu* before their first menses. However, as miscalculations often occurred, it was not uncommon for girl novices to have a menstrual period during the novitiate. If this happened, the girl had to be immediately withdrawn from the company of her co-initiates, and during the time that the menses lasted she had to remain in complete seclusion in her mother's hut, leaving it only to relieve herself. During this time the fire in her mother's hut might not on any account be allowed to go out. Should it do so, the sacrifice of a ram was necessary in order that a fresh fire be lit with fire sticks.

As a further regulation, if a girl novice menstruated during the novitiate, her father had to sleep every night in her mother's hut, but might not have sexual contact with the mother. He had to continue to this until all the girl's co-initiates had passed out of the novitiate with the ceremony of *gũthiga*. Then the girl who was in seclusion also went through the ceremony of passing out of the novitiate, after which her father had to have ceremonial sexual intercourse with her mother. This was called *gũthiĩ maambura ma ũtũndũ* (to perform the sexual ritual for the heat-swelling that caused the menses).

After a girl initiate who menstruated during her novitiate had ceased to have a flow of blood, she was given water with which to wash herself in her mother's hut, and then she might come out of seclusion. She might not, however, resume the life of a novice, and might not do (p.690) anything but sit about in the courtyard all day. If any questions were asked, it was said that she was sick. No disgrace or other permanent stigma was attached to a girl who had her menses during the novitiate and she was not dubbed a *kĩũgũ* (freak), for she had already been operated upon and was therefore potentially an initiated girl.

The period of the novitiate was regarded as very dangerous for the novices. If there was any suggestion of something happening which might affect them adversely, individual novices could be made to go through the ceremony of *gũthiga* (which ended the novitiate) prematurely so as to free them from danger. Thus, in the event of a member of a novice's family being taken seriously ill, the novice was made to *thiga* (achieve adulthood) lest the sick person should die and by so doing, harm the novice.

Therefore, in the event of sickness in the family, the father of a novice called in other elders for consultation. If they thought the condition was serious, the novice or novices of that homestead had their heads partially shaved, leaving a patch of hair on the crown (*gũtuĩrĩrũo*), and they had red ochre rubbed on their heads, hands, and clothing. Then they took off their special novice cloaks and donned the ordinary clothing of adults. This was not a full *thiga* ceremony, but was enough to end the novice stage for the individuals concerned. As adults they were no longer susceptible to harm by the death of a relative.

People who went through this simple form of *gũthiga* prematurely, or, "*Thiga na ũũru*" (Achieve adulthood in trouble), continued to go about in company with their co-initiates, but they might no longer participate in the *waine* dances or in the other games of the novices. They thus remained half-novices until all the rest of the novices had gone through the full ceremony of *gũthiga*. This was in order that they might all enter upon the *muumo* (newly come-out) stage of warriorhood and maidenhood together. Male novices who became adults prematurely did not usually go through the ceremony of "ceremonial rape" which was essential for those who did so in the normal way.

If it happened that a close relative of a novice died suddenly, he or she was not considered to be dead, nor might the body be disposed of until novices who were relatives had first become adults in the emergency way just described. The dead person was therefore kept carefully in a hut and was spoken of as "asleep" until the novices concerned had been through the ceremony. Then, as soon as they were adults, and therefore no longer in danger from the effects of the death of a relative this person who was "asleep" was allowed to "die" and the body disposed of with the normal rites and ceremonies connected with death (see Chapter 22).

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The Normal Ceremony of Gũthiga

When all the initiation ceremonies of any given year had been completed, the elders held a meeting and decided that the time had come for all the novices to go through the ceremony of *gũthiga*, and thus pass from the novice stage to adult status. As far as the male novices were concerned, this ceremony had to be preceeded by that of *kwĩhaka mũũnyũ* (literally, to anoint oneself with white saline earth), but this was simply a euphemism which, in fact, meant that the novices had to perform the act of "ceremonial rape".

As soon, therefore, as the elders had decided upon a day for the *gũthiga* ceremony (admission to adult status), the father or guardian of each male novice sent for him and told him that the time had come for him to *thiga* (end his novitiate). He further gave the novice instructions of how he was to perform the ceremony of *kwĩhaka mũũnyũ*.

As soon as all the male novices of each ridge (*rũgongo*) were ready, they banded themselves together in small groups, armed themselves with axe handles and sticks, and went off into other areas in search of a woman to rape. They had been carefully warned that the object of their search had to be a married woman and not an unmarried girl, and that she had to be a complete stranger to them.

As soon as the bands of novices met a woman who fulfilled these conditions, they seized her and proceeded to rape her in the manner described below. The reason for the boys arming themselves with axe handles was that they might well find a woman who had an escort of a married man or a warrior, in which case they would first have to fight the man and drive him off. Having seized the woman, they carried her into the bush and then two or three of the novices proceeded to rape her, having first thrown her on the ground. The others did not actually perform the sex act; it was sufficient if they worked themselves into a state of sexual excitement by handling her genitalia and her breasts. Then, when they felt that they were about to have an ejaculation, they had to stand over her so that the semen fell upon her body. This was called the ceremony *kwĩhaka mũũnyũ* (to anoint oneself with white saline earth). Each novice, as soon as he had ejaculated, took out the wooden ear plugs that were put in his ears at the initiation lodge, threw them on the ground, and rushed off to his own home to complete the ceremony of *gũthiga*.

News that the novices of one ridge had seized and raped a woman spread quickly, and novices from other neighbouring ridges came and (p.692) similarly treated the same poor, unfortunate woman. This ceremonial rape was an essential part of the ceremony of passing from the novice to the adult stage of life as far as the males were concerned, and it symbolized the fact that they were now entitled to have a sex life of their own. They might not, of course, ever again rape anyone without penalty, but this sex act performed at the instigation of their elders indicated that all the prohibitions of their boyhood were now laid to one side and that they were about to enter a stage of life in which sex played one of the most important parts.

All over the country on this day women were raped in the manner described above, and the male novices went to their homes without their ear plugs, thus indicating to their parents that they had completed the ceremony and were ready to have their heads shaved.

As for those male novices who, for one reason or another, had had to end their novitiate prematurely, custom varied considerably in various parts of the country. In some areas, they joined their co-initiates in the act of "ceremonial rape", but did not *thiga* a second time. In other areas they were not allowed to perform the ceremony of "ceremonial rape" at all, it being held that as they were already adults and therefore no longer novices, they would be liable to a fine and punishment for rape if they did so. In these areas, the novices waited until their companions had raped a woman, and then joined them again after the others had also become adults.

On the day following that of the ceremonial rape, every male novice who had not previously *thiga* had his head partially shaved and put red ochre on his body, his head, and his novice's cloak. He then handed his novice's cloak to his mother and received instead, a skin cloak of the type worn by warriors. Thus he entered into manhood. However, he only became a member of the junior warrior grade (*muumo*), and he might not use red ochre ever again until such time as he and his companions had paid a fee to the senior warriors and received their permission to do so.

On the day of the ceremonial rape, the girl novices stayed at home. The next day they achieved adulthood with the male novices. Their heads were partially shaved leaving a patch of hair on the crown (*gũtuĩrĩrũo*), their cloaks and heads were anointed with red ochre, and they were provided with skirts with long "tails", indicating that they were now *airĩtu* (unmarried, initiated girls). They did not hand back their novice cloaks to their mothers as the males did, but instead retained them as their first cloaks of maidenhood.

On the day following that of the *gũthiga* ceremony, the boys and girls who had just ceased to be novices were made to undergo one more (p.693) ceremony which was supposed to indicate that they had now become adults· This was not an official ceremony sanctioned by the elders of the tribe, but was simply a custom which had the force of tradition behind it. It was imposed upon the young warriors and maidens by others who were their seniors, and was in a sense a practical joke.

The senior warriors of each territorial unit invited the newly made warriors to come and share a feast with them, saying, "Now you are warriors as we are, come and we will give a feast to welcome you to our ranks". The unsuspecting youths were flattered by this attention from their seniors and went off merrily to find, to their horror, that the latter had roasted large numbers of maize cobs for them. Each hapless youth was given anything from 20 to 30 of these to eat, and if any of them showed signs of being unable to eat the whole of what was apportioned to him, he was abused, cursed, and even beaten. He was told that he had no sense of the laws of behaviour since he was unwilling to eat what was put before him at a feast. The seniors, in fact, took a malicious delight in forcing the juniors to eat, and then they gave them quantities of water to drink. The net result was that the juniors were soon feeling very sick indeed, and rushed off to disgorge. This was just what the seniors had been waiting for, and they laughed uproariously at the plight of the boys, and then proceeded to admonish them to put away their boyish greed and never to overeat again. In future, they were to eat in moderation as befitted men, and not disgrace the warriors class by such disgusting behaviour as being sick in public. The junior girls were similarly treated by the older initiated girls.

Naturally, after this treatment by the seniors, the juniors longed for revenge, but being unable to avenge themselves on their seniors, they waited until they were seniors themselves and then meted out similar treatment to their juniors. Thus this unofficial custom survived from year to year.

Having completed the ceremony of gũthiga and thrown away the wooden ear plugs given them at initiation, the junior warriors proceeded to make themselves new ear plugs, and they now donned all the ornaments which they had acquired during the initiation period by demanding presents from the spectators. Each junior warrior was also provided with a sword, a shield, and a spear, as the weapons of warriorhood, but these he could not use or display in public for some time (except in the case of a raid by the Maasai). If he did, they would be taken from him by the senior warriors, who would not allow juniors such privileges as this until they had paid certain fees which will be discussed in the next chapter. So although each junior warrior had (p.694) his weapons of war as soon as he entered upon adult life, he might not for the time being, make use of them.

Having thus examined the novice stage of those who were initiated in accordance with Kikuyu guild rites, we must turn to the ceremonies of the Ũkabi guild people.

The Novice Stage of the Ūkabi Guild

As we have seen in the preceding chapter, the Ũkabi guild ceremonies differed considerably from those of the Kikuyu guild in that the initiates went to their own homes and entered into the novice stage after only four days in the initiation homestead, and that they then returned to the initiation homestead for a further four days at the end of the novitiate in order to complete the nine days of initiation (including the *matuumo* day, the day before initiation). Before we consider the ceremonies which took place during the second period of four days—ceremonies which took the place of the ceremonial rape of the Kikuyu guild rites—we must briefly consider how the Ũkabi novices spent their time during the interval.

The Interval of the Novitiate

After returning to their respective homes, and having the *ndũrũme ya kũguraria* slaughtered for them (a ram to seal a contract for someone or something), each novice of the Ũkabi guild joined forces with the Kikuyu guild novices in his district and proceeded to go about with them, dancing the novices' *waine* dance, practising the dances of the adults, and generally participating in all the occupations of the Kikuyu guild novices.

Although the Okabi guild girls carried *mũcee* wands as did the Kikuyu guild girls, the male Ũkabi guild novices each carried their special bows and arrows instead, which they fetched each morning from their mothers' huts and took back there each night. With these bows and arrows they spent a part of each day hunting birds, which they skinned and stuffed with grass and attached to their *marithiani* head-dresses (in the manner of the Maasai tribe). The aim of each was to have a complete circle of bird skins round his head. The Kikuyu guild novices did not do this, but were always quite willing to help (p.695) their Ũkabi guild companions collect bird skins, and so they often hunted birds with their sticks and presented them to the others. Certain species of birds were considered to be particularly suitable for the purpose, in particular: *thũriũ* (fiscal shrike), *thonjo* (the various yellow weaver birds that build hanging nests), *nyagathanga* (streaky seed-eater), *ndutura* (various sorts of ring-necked dove), *ndete* (grass warblers of various sorts), *nyamĩndigi* (cossypha), *mũthũ* (mousebird), *gĩthimambũri* (coucal), *mũrũgũ* (Jackson's widow bird), and *kiugũigũ* (nightjar).

Although the Kikuyu and Ũkabi guild novices spent all their days together and went about in bands, and although later they would be equals in all respects, during the novitiate they had to be careful not to sleep in each other's homes. To do this would have been to incur grave risk of ill luck, for novices were, as we have seen, supposed to be particularly susceptible to all kinds of uncleanness.

At least one full month had to elapse before the novices of the Ũkabi guild could return to the initiation homestead for the second half of their ceremonies, but the actual day was fixed by the *mũruithia* (initiation host), who sent messages to the parents of the various novices who had been initiated at his homestead to tell them to send the novices back on such-and-such a day for the concluding ceremonies.

Return to the Initiation Homestead

On the day appointed for their return to the initiation homestead, each novice had his or her rawhide strip that had been made from the *ndũrũme ya kũguraria* taken off, and replaced by the strip that had been brought with him or her from the initiation homestead. The novices were then given their bows and arrows and their string bags, according to their sex, and in the late afternoon were sent back to the initiation homestead in order that they might sleep the night there in readiness the next day. This night was looked upon as if it were the night of the day when they went to their own homes for the interval. This was, therefore, the fourth night of the post-initiation period of eight days and eight nights.

At the initiation homestead, a special brew of honey beer had been prepared in the special *ndua ya mũrũngũ* (big brewing gourd for the ceremonial honey beer). On arrival, the initiates were told that they were to *raaria mũrũngũ*, that is, to be in charge of this beer for the night. As each novice arrived, he or she was met by the initiation mother, who took the bows and arrows and the string bags and hung (p.696) them up in the headquarters hut. Then, after eating, the novices all slept in that hut.

***The Fifth Day* (*The First Day after the Interval*)**

The ceremonies of this day simply symbolized the more detailed and significant ceremonies of the opening days of the initiation, that is, the day of the *matuumo* and the day of the actual operation. In the morning the novices went out to the entrance area of the homestead, danced round a *mũkenia* plant, and sang the songs which they had sung round the wild olive branches on the *matuumo* day. By so doing they symbolically revived the *matuumo* ceremonies which they had been through, and whose effect had been rendered dormant by the interval during which they had been wandering about the country as novices dancing the *waine* dance.

Having thus had the associations of the *matuumo* revived in their minds, the novices were divided into male and female groups and symbolically operated upon with a twig of a *mũkengeria* plant. This act was not performed by the real professional operator, but by any senior man or senior woman who happened to be available, for the significance was purely symbolic.

This done, the novices lined up in order of seniority and went in two files to the door of the headquarters hut, where they were met by the *mũruithia* and his wife, and the senior adviser and his wife, who proceeded to anoint them with *ira* powder and to spit honey beer over them and perform the curious act of *gũcũngĩra*, which has already been described (a formal bowing to the novices).

Again we see that these ceremonies were merely reflections of the ceremonies of the real initiation days, and they were performed with many details omitted: there was no ceremonial fire, for instance, no wall of dung, and no dragging into the headquarters hut backwards**.** All that happened was a repetition of certain incidents to revive the initiates' memories of the original ceremonies.

When this had been concluded, the initiates were left to their own devices for the rest of the day, while the *mũruithia*, his advisers, and a few assistants slaughtered a he-goat, called *thenge ya gwĩtiira* (a he-goat for propping oneself up). This was probably a reflection of Kikuyu initiation guild custom. The flesh of this goat was eaten by the mũruithia his advisers, and any others whom they cared to share it with, and had (p.697) no special ceremonial significance in the Ũkabi ceremonies, so far as I could find out

The women and younger men of the homestead, with the help of neighbours, spent the latter part of the day getting sugar-cane ready to be brewed on the following day. It would be consumed on the day after in connection with the shaving of the novices, a ceremony which would be attended by all of their relatives.

That night, when the novices had all entered the headquarters hut, the "sacrifice" which was characteristic of the Ũkabi guild ceremonies, and took the place of the ceremonial sex act of the Kikuyu guild, was performed, consisting, among other things, of moving the blue bead necklace from the *mũruithia'*s forehead on to his neck.

The Sixth Day

This day opened with the ceremony of *kuuna matũ*. In the Ũkabi guild, when the novices went before the *mũruithia* and the advisers for this ceremony, they did not kneel before them as the Kikuyu guild initiates did, but instead sat on specially prepared logs of *mũringa* wood, taking their places on these in the order of their seniority (first the senior boy and then the senior girl, and so on) and the elders came to them there and proceeded to perform the ceremony of *kuuna matũ*. This, in the Ũkabi guild, consisted of removing the brass coiled wire earrings from the boys' ears and the plugs of leather from the girls' ears and putting these on to a winnowing tray. When all the novices had been through this ceremony, the *mũruithia* and his wife were shaved ceremonially in preparation for the shaving of the novices on the following day.

First of all the *mũruithia's* head was shaved by his wife, the initiation mother, and then the initiation mother was shaved by the wife of the senior adviser. The advisers and their wives were not shaved on this occasion. Only water was used in the shaving ceremony, and the whole head was shaved, after which mutton fat, not butter, was used to anoint their heads.

The rest of the day was spent in pounding and preparing beer from the sugar-cane which had been cut and prepared on the previous day. The beer was set to brew in the headquarters hut in readiness for the following day, which was the really important one in the whole of these cerernonies. In certain districts, on the second day after the interval novices were given water with which to wash themselves in the headquarters hut, but this was not a universal feature of the ceremonies.

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The Seventh Day

On the morning of the seventh day, the parents and relatives of even, novice came to the initiation homestead to witness and help in the ceremony of shaving the heads of the novices, and they brought with them presents of beer and food as contributions to the feast.

The parents of each novice had made a special arrangement with some woman friend to come and perform the actual shaving of their child. This woman was called the *mwenjani* (the one who shaves people) and the invitation to her was called *gũthuuga* (a giving of presents). As a fee each was entitled to a gourd of beer, another of gruel, a bunch of bananas, and a gourd bottle full of castor oil.

When the preparations were ready, the novices all came and sat on the *mũringa* logs which they had used for the ceremony of *kuuna matũ* on the previous day. As they took their seats, they removed their *marithiani* head-dresses and handed them to their sponsors, who were in attendance.

The male sponsors set to work to undo the *marithiani* of the boys, placing all the stuffed bird skins and other parts on winnowing trays, while the female sponsors took apart the girls' *marithiani*, which were adorned with cowrie shells. Each sponsor handed to his or her charge a bead necklace, which each novice had to put on to the neck of his or her *mwenjani* at the shaving ceremony as a recognition of the service rendered. When the novices had handed over their *marithiani*, and were all seated, the initiation mother brought out a big half-gourd of water which she had specially drawn herself that morning for the purpose, and into this she put a little fresh cow's milk (and sometimes also a little honey beer, but this was a variation that was not consistent). The *mũruithia* then came forward with a bunch of *mũtei* leaves, which were to be used for sprinkling the water on to the heads of the novices as they were shaved.

Each shaver had come provided with a razor in readiness for the ceremony. The women who had been chosen to shave the senior boy and senior girl started on their task, and as soon as they had removed a little of their charges' hair, all the other shavers got busy, and soon every novice was being carefully shaved, after first having placed his or her necklace on the neck of the person who was to do the shaving. As the head of each novice was finished, he or she removed the rawhide strip acquired on the second day of the ceremonies and handed it to one of the advisers, who broke open the loops, thus destroying them, and placed them upon the winnowing trays with the *marithiani* head-dresses (p.699). Then a little milk was poured on the crown of the head of each novice, who next proceeded to remove the little bit of sheep skin that was fastened to the corner of the novice cloak and to hand this also to the advisers, who added all these bits to the piles on the winnowing trays.

This done, each novice took all of the hair which had been shaved from his or her head and had been put on one corner of the skin cloak, carried it out beyond the entrance area into the bush, and hid it secretly.

Meanwhile, the male sponsors, assisted by some other warriors, had been busy cutting wooden ear plugs, and as soon as the novices had thrown away their hair, they went and received these and fitted them into their ears.

When the shaving ceremony was over, the initiation mother took the marithiani head-dresses, rawhide strips, and the leather skin fragments, etc. from the trays, and put them under her bed at the *thegi* (storeroom) end of it, where they were left to rot or to be eaten by rats and mice. The bird skins of the boys, on the other hand, were taken by the advisers and thrown away in the bush. Not only did the sponsors have to undo and dismantle all the head-dresses of the male novices, but they also dismantled the special arrows of the boys, putting the leather discs and the wax on the winnowing trays with the rawhide strips. The arrow staves were then broken up and thrown away. As for the bows, the bowstring of sinew was removed and was temporarily kept by the sponsor, who on the following day handed it to the initiate's father, together with the two ostrich feathers

that had been used as plumes for the *marithiani* head-dress. The bowstring would later be used by the father for his "bleeding bow", while the feathers were stored in a bamboo container for some future occasion. Then the initiation mother came out with mutton fat and ceremonially anointed the head of each male and female novice, after which they were all given food and gruel to consume, and the feasting and beer drinking started for all the assembled spectators.

It should be noted that, unlike the male novices, whose ostrich plumes and bowstring were handed to their fathers, the girls themselves were given back their cowrie shells—symbols of fertility—from their head-dresses, and also their little string bags, to keep for all time. These things were not put under the initiation mother's bed to rot.

After the shaving ceremony had been completed and the novices had been fed, and while the elders and senior women were feasting and drinking beer, the male sponsors each presented their charges with a spear, a shield, and a sword, which they had borrowed for them, (p.700)

and also, if possible, a war headdress (*gĩtukũ*). The boys put on all these things and were then sent off on a "Maasai raid", to symbolize that they were now grown-up men. Meanwhile, the female sponsors took the girl novices with them to some nearby cultivation and made them do a little symbolic weeding, after which they each cut a little bundle of firewood which they took to the headquarters hut and handed over to the initiation mother.

The girls then awaited the return of the raiding party. The male novices had gone out to the area where the flocks and herds of the initiation village were feeding, and there, under the guidance of the male sponsors, they drove off the herdsmen, and drove their spoil back to the initiation homestead, where they were hailed with cries of joy from the women and girls. The flocks were promptly provided with a special feed of saline earth, as they would have been if they had been real raided stock, and the "warriors" proceeded to dance and sing the raiding dances and songs. The girls joined them and all the initiates openly danced the dances of the adults, such as *mũgoiyo* and *gĩcukia*, to show everyone that they were now grown-up. This dancing continued until nightfall, when all the guests departed and the novices were left for the concluding ceremonies.

In this last ceremony of the day, the advisers untied from the bottle gourd of ceremonial beer the bunch of withered Kikuyu grass that had been attached to it all this time. They threw the grass away and placed the gourd in the headquarters hut. The novices were then summoned to come and sleep in the headquarters hut for the last time, and when they were all present, the "sacrifice" with the string of blue beads took place for the last time and the novices went to sleep.

The Eighth Day

This, the eighth day of the ceremonies, was the ninth since the *matuumo*, if the interval of a month was not counted, and on this day the novices went to their own homes once more. On the last morning there was no ceremony at all; each novice simply went home, was met there by his or her parents, and anointed with butterfat as a sign of blessing.

Having thus completed their ceremonies, it might be expected that these Ũkabi guild novices would proceed to the ceremony of *gũthiga* (admission to adulthood) at once, but they did not. Instead, they rejoined their Kikuyu guild companions and went about with them, (p.701) but did not any longer dance the *waine* dance; they practised the dances of the grown-ups by themselves.

Then, when the Kikuyu guild novices had completed the act of ceremonial rape (*kwĩhaka mũũnyũ*), the Kikuyu guild and Ũkabi guild novices all passed out of the novice stage and became adult members of the community as members of a single initiation age-group (*riika*).

Purification of the Initiation Village in Ūkabi Guild Rites

On the morning that the novices went to their respective homes, the *mũruithia* proceeded to untie the leather strap that fastened the two *mũtamaiyũ* branches to the right-hand door post of the headquarters hut. As he did so, he anointed both the branches and the strap, as well as the door posts, with *ira* powder to purify them. He then handed the strap back to his wife, who anointed it with castor oil before putting it in her hut for normal use once more. He did not pull out the *mũtamaiyũ* branches at this point, however, but left them in position until the day he performed the ceremony of *gũcokia ngorono ya mwana* (see below). Next he got a few of the women of his homestead to prepare some sugar-cane juice for beer, and this beer was put to brew in the special small *ndua* (*gatua*) that had been used for the ceremonial honey beer. This was done to purify this brewing gourd, so that it could be used again for normal purposes. The same *mĩratina* (bits of *Kigelia africana* fruit) were used for fermenting this sugar-cane beer as had been used all along for the sacred honey beer, and having been used, they too were now purified.

After the beer had been brewed and the brewing gourd and *mĩratina* had been purified, a little of this beer was poured into the holes in which the *mũtamaiyũ* branches were stuck. However, the branches were still not actually pulled out and placed on the roof of the hut, for this might not be done until after the ceremony of sexual intercourse called *gũcokia ngorono ya mwana*.

The following day was regarded as a day of rest. On the day after that, however, the medicine-man was sent for and he came to perform the ceremony of purifying not only the *mũruithia* and his wife, but also the headquarters hut. This ceremony was the same as that performed in purification of the *mũruithia* in the Kikuyu guild ceremonies, and therefore need not be described again.

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***The Ceremony of Gũcokia Ngorono ya M wan a* (*To put back the Child's Butterfat*)**

As we have already seen, the Ũkabi guild ceremonies did not include any ceremonial sex acts during the initiation period, but a ceremonial sex act did take place at the conclusion of the ceremonies, on the night of the eighth day (the ninth day from the *matuumo*) after the novices had dispersed to their own homes.

This sex act was spoken of as *gũcokia ngorono ya mwana* (to put back the child's butterfat). The *mũruithia* and his wife had to have sexual intercourse twice in the headquarters hut with their son and daughter, that is, the senior boy and girl novices, present in the girls' bedroom next to their mother's.

Next morning, after washing his hands, face, and ankles ceremonially, the *mũruithia* removed the two olive branches that had been affixed to the door post of the hut, and laid them on the roof, so that the dried twigs projected over the eaves at the doorway. This was a sign that he had completed the ceremony as far as his own children were concerned. Then, after a day's interval, the parents of each novice similarly performed two sex acts in order to *cokia ngorono* for their children.

Instruction and Education of the Young Adults

After the initiates of both the Kikuyu and the Ũkabi guilds had become novices, and were living in their own homes, they were given instruction by their parents as to what they might and might

not do during the novitiate. They were not at this stage given any detailed instructions on the rules of behaviour that they had to observe once they were fully-fledged adults.

This later instruction was reserved till after they had completed the ceremony of *gũthiga* and had actually entered upon the life of adults. Then each father called his son to him and gave him instruction in social behaviour and morals as far as they concerned him as a warrior. He was not, however, given instructions on the correct methods of having full sexual intercourse, for according to tribal law, custom strickly forbade a man having full intercourse until such time as he should marry. Then, and only then, would he receive the instruction together with rules of behaviour such as befitted a married man. For (p.703) the moment all that he needed was instruction in how to conduct himself as a warrior, and all the teaching he was given had this in view.

It is not possible to give a complete list of the instructions given by fathers to sons who had just achieved adulthood, because they varied with individuals, but the following is a list of the more important of them, which were always mentioned when I was discussing the subject, together with others that were less universal.

1. Now that you are a warrior, never touch an uninitiated girl, even in fun, unless she is a member of your own family. If you touch the uninitiated girl of any other family, the penalty is serious and you will have to pay a fine of a fat ram. (This prohibition extended even to holding the hand of an unrelated, uninitiated girl.)

2. In no circumstances are you to give way to temptation and have sexual intercourse with any man's wife until you yourself are married. If you do so you will cease to be strong, you will fail in your duties as a warrior, and you will bring shame and poverty on your parents. Moreover, if your sin is found out you will incur dire penalties.

3. Never in any circumstances attempt to have full sexual intercourse with any initiated, unmarried girl (*mũirĩtu*) who may become your lover. All that is allowed to you by our custom is to have *nguĩko ya nyondo* (to lie with a girl, caress her breasts, and have a form of mutual masturbation). In no circumstances touch her genitalia with your hands. All that you may touch, with her consent, is her *ng'athi* (the cicatrices on her *mons veneris*).

4. In no circumstances say to yourself, "I wish to marry the girl, therefore I will have full sexual intercourse with her, although by custom I may not do so". Should you do this, and should the girl become pregnant as a result, you will involve us in the payment of fines, and further, should she by any chance die as a result of your causing her to become pregnant while yet unmarried, you will involve your family in great shame, and considerable expense.

5. When you wish to marry, come first and consult me, your father, and I will advise you and help you to arrange a marriage in accordance with Kikuyu custom.

6. In no circumstances fight with any man who was your co-initiate at the same initiation homestead with you. If you get angry with such a man and so wish to fight, do not in any case draw blood from him. You are his *wakint* (co-initiate), and you have had *ira* powder put on together. If you draw blood from such (p.703) a man you will become unclean and many sacrifices will be necessary to cleanse you.

7. Now that you are an adult and no longer a boy, take ca how you speak to your father's brothers (*agendi a thoguo*), for if you insult any of them in any way, it is evil, and you will have to pay a fine of a he-goat on each occasion that you do so.

8. Now that you are a grown man, take care how you address any of the co-wives of your own mother. If you should insult them or abuse them, or if you should touch them, you will have to pay a fine, and I myself will fight you.'

9. Be humble in your behaviour towards the warriors of age-groups senior to your own, and obey them in all things until such time as you have reached a footing of equality with them by paying all the fees required of a junior age-group to the senior ones. Even if you consider yourself stronger than one of them, be humble and not aggressive towards him, for as a senior he has it in his power to destroy you by witchcraft (*ũrogi*) if you either insult or disobey him.

10. Now that you are a man, see to it that you take your share of the duties of looking after our family property. Defend it from the Maasai and from all enemies. If and when I am drunk and therefore incapable of looking after the home myself, remember that the care and charge of our homestead rests equally with you now that you are a man.

11. Now that you are a man, see to it that if any person attacks you, you fight back and are not a coward. Moreover, do not expect any help from me or from your brothers so long as your assailant is but one person.

12. If you are wounded at any time, do not show your feelings, do not moan or cry as a boy would, for now you are a man and no longer a boy, and must behave as a man.

13. Do not expect any help from me in the matter of accumulating wealth of your own. If you want cattle, go with the other warriors and raid the Maasai. Do not be a coward, for if you do not help yourself you need expect no help from me. I expect you, now that you are a man, to add to our family wealth by your own efforts, not to drain our wealth by your failures.

14. If any person should come and try to take our goats and sheep from us, or if anyone attacks our homestead or our village or any member of it, fight and have no fear of the consequences of killing them, for I and our family will pay any fines that you may involve us in if you are acting in our defence.

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15. Remember the things that I have taught you, be wise, and come always to me for advice; I am your father and you are my son.

There was no need for any special teaching about the ordinary everyday taboos (*mĩgiro*) concerning behaviour, for these should all have been learnt in the course of the instruction that was frequently given to children at night round the fire, and also through observation and practical experience.

As far as practical education was concerned, the details and technique of the special form of sexual play that was legitimate for young warriors and maidens, were taught to the new warriors by the girls of the next senior age-group, and they also taught the newly initiated girls. This will be further discussed in the next chapter on warriors and maidens. Girls, after initiation and after the *thiga* ceremony was over, were summoned by their mothers, and they, too, were given a series of rules of behaviour to guide them during their life as unmarried, initiated girls. Although the instructions given, varied to some extent, and might be more numerous in some cases than in others, the most important rules which were always taught were as follows:

1. You are now a *mũirĩtu* (unmarried, initiated girl), but you have not yet had your first menses (this of course did not apply to those who had suffered the misfortune of having their first menses

before or during the initiation period, or during the novitiate). Until this time arrives, take care that you do not sleep anywhere but here in my hut in the girls' bed, lest, if you sleep in someone else's hut, you come into contact with the menstrual blood of other women or girls, which is very serious and harmful before you have had your own first menses.

2. When your first menstrual period comes upon you, if it should be while you are in the fields or upon the road, do not in any circumstances, cover with earth any blood that falls to the ground; do not wipe yourself with any leaves, but only with your skirt, and come back here to me as soon as possible in order that the appropriate rites, ceremonies, and customs may be observed.

3. Be humble in all your dealings with the girls of senior age-groups, and pay them all respect and obedience until such time as you and your companions have paid all the fees that are due from you and which will make you their equals.

When you accept any warrior as a lover, do not in any circumstances allow him to have full intercourse with you, but only (p.706) sleep with him and have *nguĩko ya nyondo* (restricted sexual inter course) with him. You will be instructed how to perform this *nguĩko* by the senior girls.

5. Never play with, or have anything to do with any uninitiated boy. You are now an adult and you must have nothing to do with boys.

6. If any man who is your lover tries to tempt you to have full intercourse, or if he tries to force you, or if he tries to touch your pubic apron to remove it, or if he touches your genitalia, have nothing more to do with him, but choose another lover who is pure (*mũthingu*). If your wicked lover persists, denounce him to all the other girls and to the warriors, and his name will become a shame among you.

7. Be obedient and humble to all my co-wives; they are like junior mothers to you, and you must obey them even as you obey me.

8. In no circumstances draw blood from any girl who was initiated with you at the same initiation homestead. To do so is very evil and will bring misfortune upon you.

9. Take care that you avoid any kind of sexual contact with cousins, half-brothers, or with close relatives such as uncles. They are your family, and you must not touch them nor let them touch you.

10. Remember that you are a woman, and that you will soon be sought in marriage. Therefore be industrious and hard working so that the good men may desire you as a wife.

On the whole, a girl was given less instruction than a warrior because her life was lived in much closer contact with her mother than a warrior's was with his father. A mother could help and advise her daughter all the time, whereas a warrior was often away from home for long periods.

With the end of the novitiate, the boys and girls entered upon their life as adults, and we must now consider that aspect of their lives in a separate chapter.

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Introduction

When the girls and boys who had been initiated during a given year eventually performed the ceremony of *gũthiga* and passed out of the novice stage, they entered upon an entirely new life as warriors and maidens. Although officially they were now adults with all the rights and privileges of adult status, they did not in practice gain any of these privileges and rights at once, because the senior warriors and maidens were very jealous and would not allow the newly initiated adults to exercise their rights without the payment of fees. These fees were not demanded of the individuals, but of the new age-group as a whole, and were paid by the members of the new age-group in each territorial unit to the members of the senior age-group in that same territorial unit.

Mention of the word age-group, which is the nearest English equivalent to the Kikuyu word *riika*, demands some amplification, and this must therefore precede our study of the life of warriors and maidens in South Kikuyu.

Age-group among the Kikuyu

To the Kikuyu mind, the word *riika*, which we translate as "age- group", conveyed the idea of a group of people who were bound together by the fact that they had undergone certain *rites de passage*, not as individuals, but as a group.

We have already studied certain of the *rites de passage* of the Southern Kikuyu and we have noted that some of them, such as birth and "second birth", were ceremonies affecting individuals, while others, such as initiation, though affecting individuals in one sense, really affected a whole group of individuals. The Kikuyu word *riika* was applied to three quite distinct types of age-group, and for the sake of clarity we shall first have to examine each of these briefly and then invent terms to differentiate them.

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1.The first, and narrowest, sense of the word *riika*, denoted an "initiation age-group", that is to say, the group of men and women who were initiated in any given year over all of South Kikuyu and who were given an age-group name which was usually connected with some outstanding event in the life of the people at about the time when their initiation ceremonies took place. The initiation *riika*, to be recognised as such, included about an equal number of both sexes, or possibly more males than females, and if in any year only girls were initiated, for reasons which will be discussed later, such an initiation age-group did not rank as a proper "initiation *riika*" at all.

2. The males of each true initiation *riika* constituted one division of a "regiment *riika*", which, to be complete, always had to contain nine of these minor initiation *mariika* (pi. of *riika*)

3. The broadest sense in which the Kikuyu used the word *riika* denoted a generation, and the group *rite de passage* which linked a whole generation together in the Kikuyu conception of the word *riika* was the *ituĩka* ceremony, which took place about once in every 30 to 35 years. This ceremony need not be discussed here since it is the subject of Chapter 29, and it will suffice if we note that whenever we wish to refer to a *riika* in this sense we shall use the phrase "generation *riika*".

Although an initiation *riika* contained both males and females, the girls who were initiated with the boys of an initiation *riika* were never spoken of as belonging to the boys' regiment *riika*, as this referred exclusively to units in the military organisation of the tribe. This method of

organisation requires our careful consideration here, and will not be discussed in the chapter on warfare and raiding, as it belongs more properly to this chapter.

The Regiment Riika

The Kikuyu military organisation resembled that of the Maasai in one important respect: it was considered necessary that there should always be one complete regiment *riika* on the active list ready for any emergency. The members of a regiment *riika*, therefore, could not retire as a unit until such time as a new regiment *riika* composed of nine initiation *mariika* was completed. Then, and only then, did the senior regiment *riika* give way to the junior. The elaborate ceremonies accompanying (p.709) transition affected each whole regiment *riika* as a body, and effectively linked the individual members of the new body together to form a military unit.

The bare statement that each regiment *riika* was composed of nine initiation ones, taken in conjunction with the fact that initiation ceremonies were an annual event, would seem to suggest that it took but nine years to complete a regiment *riika*, but this was not, in fact, the case. Initiation ceremonies had to take place every year in order that there should be ample opportunity for every girl who was approaching puberty to be initiated before her first menses. However, if in any year the leaders of the regiment *riika* in power considered the number of male candidates for initiation over the whole of South Kikuyu was smaller than usual, and more particularly if those candidates were not considered to be old enough and strong enough to take up the duties of warriors, then the senior regiment *riika* leaders, in consultation with the tribal elders, had the power to prohibit the initiation of males for one or two years. This power was frequently exercised, with the result that it took anything from 12 to 14 years for a regiment *riika* of nine full initiation *mariika* to be completed. Moreover, custom required that as soon as a regiment *riika* was completed by the initiation of the ninth initiation *riika*, all further initiation of males was prohibited for nine planting seasons, or four and a half years.

As soon as a new regiment *riika* was completed and the order given that further initiation of males was to be stopped for nine planting seasons, steps were taken whereby the new regiment took over the control of the country's military organisation, and the whole of the members of the senior *riika* retired *en masse* and became elders instead of warriors. The interval of nine planting seasons that was imposed by custom between the completion of one regiment *riika* and the opening of a new one served several purposes. In the first place, it provided an effective gap between two regiments, so that it was easier for the members of the complete regiment *riika* to impose their authority upon the members of the new regiment *riika* when it began to come into being. In the second place, it ensured that the boys who were initiated into the first minor division of the new regiment *riika* would be of reasonably mature age and capable of taking up their duties as the leaders of the new regiment *riika* that was about to be formed. Thirdly, it provided a breathing space which enabled the newly completed regiment *riika* that was taking over the control of military matters to become thoroughly acquainted with their duties before they had to start supervising new divisions of a regiment *riika* in the making.

This Kikuyu system of age-group organisation had some curious (p.710) results. It meant that some men remained in the category of warriors for up to 35 years, and the senior members of one complete regiment *riika*, by the time they came to retire from the active list, were often in the curious position of having their own sons as members of the regiment *riika* to which they handed over control. This statement will be supported by concrete examples presently.

The study of regiment *mariika* and the numbers of years which such a *riika* represented is important, because it gives us one of the most reliable clues for fixing approximate dates in Kikuyu history. In the absence of written records, it is obvious that the complete list of minor or annual, initiation *mariika* cannot be compiled, except for the later years of the nineteenth century and for the present century, because the names of the initiation age-groups were of importance only to their own members, and with their death the memory of them was lost.

On the other hand, the regiment *riika* was of importance to, and were therefore recorded in, traditional history, and the names of the last eleven of these can be ascertained with a reasonable degree of accuracy by checking and cross-checking the information from a number of informants.

The last regiment *riika* to be completed and organised in accordance with recognised custom was that known as *Njenga* (or *Mbĩra*), which was completed in 1892. Then the initiation of males was prohibited for four and a half years, and in 1897 the age-group called *Kienjeku* was initiated, which should have been the starting point for the formation of a new regiment *riika*. The coming of the European, however, and the imposition of British rule, removed the *raison d'etre* of organised military power among the Kikuyu, and in consequence this new regiment *riika* was never completed in accordance with original custom. Instead, a new and much modified system took its place, one which is outside the scope of this book, which is concerned only with the customs in existence in the last century.

The *Njenga* regiment *riika* which was completed in 1892, and proceeded to take over control, was made up of the following nine initiation *mariika: Wanyoike*, *Boro*, *Kĩnĩtĩ*, *Ngarũiya*, *Kĩanjagĩ*, *Mbũrũ*, *Ũhere*, *Ngigĩ*, and *Mũtũng'ũ*. Fortunately, it is possible to fix the dates of the initiation years of at least some of these divisions from contemporary written history, and by this means we can obtain a good idea of the length of time required for the formation of a complete regiment *riika·*

The *Mũtũng'ũ* initiation *riika* was initiated in 1892, and the members of the *Ũhere riika* had already been initiated when Teleki passed (p.711) through Kikuyu country in October of 1887, so they were probably initiated in 1887. The *Ngigĩ* came, therefore, somewhere between 1887 and 1892, and since my Kikuyu informants all agreed that only two initiations of girls intervened between *Ngigĩ* and *Mũtũng'ũ,* we may put the former as 1889. This is confirmed by the account of Lugard who, in 1890, recorded that locusts (*ngigĩ*) had recently devastated the land. The *Mbũrũ* was not separated from *Ũhere* by any purely female initiation ceremony, so that can be dated as 1886. On the other hand, there were two years with nothing but female initiations separating *Mbũrũ* from *Kĩanjagĩ*, so that they were probably initiated in 1883. The first five divisions: *Wanyoike*, *Boro*, *Kĩnĩtĩ*, *Ngarũiya*, and *Kĩanjagĩ* were said to have been initiated in as many successive years without any break, so that the *Wanyoike* can be dated at about 1879. This makes a period of about 14 years for the completion of the *Njenga* regiment *riika*.

To this we must add the nine planting seasons or four and a half years which separated the *Njenga* from the preceeding regiment *riika*, the *Mbũgua*. Most informants agreed that the *Mbũgua* regiment *riika* had only three intervals when girls alone were initiated, so that that regiment probably took 12 years to be completed. We can thus estimate that from the start of one regiment *riika* to the completion of its successor required a period of approximately 12 + 4½ + 14 years, that is to say 30½ years. This agrees well with the Kikuyu opinion that two regiment *mariika* were roughly the equivalent of one generation *riika*.

This estimate also tallies with the known fact that by the time the members of one regiment retired, many of them already had sons and daughters who had been initiated. To give one of numerous actual examples, many of the first-born sons of the *Ngũgĩ* initiation *riika* of the *Mbũgua* regiment *riika* were initiated in the *Mũtũng'ũ* initiation which brought the next regiment *riika* to a close, so that for a short time fathers and sons were warriors together, the former belonging to the senior regiment that was about to retire and the latter to the new regiment that was about to come into power.

Any boys who, through illness or other accident, missed an initiation ceremony in which they had received permission to participate, might, if they liked, be initiated with the girls at an otherwise purely female initiation. They then were either attached to the initiation *riika* senior to them, which by right they ought to have belonged to, or else they had to wait and joint the next *riika* that had male as well as female initiates in it.

During the four and a half years interval between the completion of (p.712) one regiment *riika* and the beginning of another, no males could in an circumstances be initiated, but all through this interval annual iniations of girls took place as usual.

Having thus briefly reviewed the general system on which warriors were organised, we can pass to a fuller study of the lives of warriors This involves a study of the lives of the girls at the same time, for the warriors and maidens spent much of their time together, and shared many activities.

First of all we must consider the steps by which a young warrior who had just emerged from the novice stage gradually attained full warrior status and finally seniority.

Steps towards attaining Full Warrior Status

As *aanake a muumo* (warriors who have just come out), the members of a newly initiated age-group were not entitled to the normal privileges of the warrior class as a whole until they had paid the requisite fees. Meanwhile, they were provided by their fathers with the means to buy spears, swords, and shields, but they could not use any of these or parade with them in public without risking attack by the senior warriors. In the event of a raid into Kikuyu country by an enemy, they could arm themselves for the emergency, but they could not wander about the country armed, as this would have been tantamount to claiming equality with their seniors.

In each and every territorial unit, therefore, the *aanake a muumo* set to work to accumulate the necessary fees, and with them to purchase the privileges of warriorhood, called *ũcũrũ*, *ndaka*, and *gĩcukia*. As soon as they had acquired these three "rights" they became entitled to carry arms, after which they had to find the means for further fees in order to proceed to other privileges, such as those of *njaga* and *kĩrĩri*. The significance, and also the means of obtaining each of these privileges, will be discussed in order, after which we must also consider the special fees paid by some individuals—as distinct from the members of the age-group of the territorial unit as a whole—for special rights such as *kwambatĩra*, *nyambo*, and *ndundu*. We shall also have to discuss certain fees payable by the members of a new regiment as a whole, both before and after it was completed, to the members of the senior regiment *riika* that they would eventually supercede. These fees were known as *airĩtu*, *mũtwe*, *ihĩ*, and *ũthigani*.

p.713

Fees Paid by each New Initiation Riika to purchase the Privileges of Warriorhood

Mbũri cia Ũcũrũ (*Goats or Rams for Gruel*)

In the very early days of the nineteenth century the warriors of the senior grades had the right to demand eight gourds of *ũcũrũ* gruel, together with eight half-gourds of cooked *njahĩ* beans, from every newly initiated warrior in their territorial division. This right weighed so heavily upon the parents of young warriors that in the course of time the elders of the tribe decided that every newly initiated warrior could commute this fee by paying one fat ram or goat instead of the gruel and beans. This alternative payment, once sanctioned, was quickly accepted by all, and by the latter part of the nineteenth century it had become the only manner in which the fee could be paid.

As soon, therefore, as they had achieved adulthood (*thiga*), the new warriors of each territorial unit would each ask their fathers for a ram or goat, and these they handed over to the leading warriors of the initiation age-group immediately senior to them. These warriors, having received the fees from all the new warriors in their area, had to divide them up and give rather more than half to the warriors of the senior complete regiment *riika* that was then in power (*ene watho*). The remaining animals were slaughtered and consumed by the warriors of the regiment *riika* in process of formation, other than those who had actually paid the fees.

Let us take an actual example to make the position clear. When the new initiation age-group called *Mũtũng'ũ* had been through the ceremony of *gũthiga* in 1893 (that is, operated on in October 1892), the Members of this initiation age-group in each territorial area collected the requisite rams and goats and handed these over to the leading Warriors of the *Ngigĩ* initiation age-group, who were their immediate seniors. The latter then divided up the animals and handed over rather more than half as tribute to the then ruling regiment age-group, *Mbũgua*. The *Mbũgua* warriors killed and ate their share of the animals as and when they liked. The remaining animals were killed and eaten by the *Ngigĩ* warriors together with the warriors of each of the other initiation age-groups senior to them who were part of the new regiment age-group called *Njenga* that was in process of formation. The same procedure took place in every territorial unit, and in a short space of time every young warrior had paid his *ũcũrũ* (gruel) fee.

p.714
The payment of the *ũcũrũ* fee gave these newly initiated warriors no specific rights other than that of proceeding to the payment of the *ndaka* and *gĩcukia* fees. In other words, it was a kind of "entrance fee" which merely entitled them to start paying their membership fees.

They now entered into a period which was given up to informal meat feasts, to which they invited members of the senior age-groups in order to win their friendship and so have people who would speak in their favour in any discussion that arose as to how the new, young warriors were to be treated.

Mbũri cia Ndaka (*Goats or Rams for Mud*)

After waiting at least one full month, the members of the new initiation age-group of each territorial unit called a meeting and decided that the time had come for offering the senior warriors the *mbũri cia ndaka*. The payment of this fee would give them the right to anoint their hair and bodies with red ochre, to substitute *ndebe* ear ornaments for the wooden ear plugs, and to start taking an open pride in their personal appearance and dress. The *mbũri cia ndaka* were not paid by individuals, but a goat or ram was demanded of every two warriors, each of whom contributed a kid or ewe toward the price. When the whole of the fee had been collected, the leaders of the new initiation age-group selected two or three of their own number to approach the senior warriors and offer them the fee. If the senior warriors agreed to negotiate, they replied that the juniors were to bring so many animals for slaughter to such- and-such a place the following day. The junior

warriors then handed over the requisite number, retaining the rest of the animals that they had collected for another day, as they knew that they would have to provide animals on several occasions.

The senior warriors who received the *mbũri cia ndaka* were those of all the various initiation age-groups senior to the *muumo* and belonging to the regiment age-group in process of formation. These warriors were under no obligation to hand over any part of the fee to the regiment that was in power, other than the *ngerima* (fourth chamber of the stomach) of every beast slaughtered. In practice, however, instead of handing all these over one at a time, one whole ram was handed over to represent the sum total of all the *ngerima*. This practice was insisted upon by the members of the regiment in power, as it was obviously more satisfactory for them to have a whole animal to kill and eat when they pleased than receive a number of little portions to share among themselves at odd times.

p.715
The meat of the animals slaughtered by the recipients of the fees was in principle eaten by them, but from each animal they cut off the forelegs (*moko*), one set of the first three ribs plus part of the sternum (*kĩĩga*), the lower portion of the breast (*kĩnena*), and one cheek or side of the face minus the ear (*rũthĩa*). These joints were given back to the newly initiated warriors, who lit a fire for themselves and cooked their meat at some distance from their seniors. The dividing up of the head of each slaughtered animal (*gũtinia mũtwe*—to cut up the head) could not be performed at ceremonial feasts such as this by the members of the regiment that was as yet incomplete, because they had not yet paid the *mũtwe* (head) fee described later in this chapter. Three members of the regiment that was in power had, therefore, to be called in to perform this service, for which they received a special fee of a live ram.

When the feasting was in progress, the members of the senior initiation age-group of the incomplete regiment age-group gave presents of certain joints to any friends they had among the newly initiated warriors. This was not compulsory, but was a recognised form of politeness and was a way of sealing the friendship formed at the informal meat feasts that followed the paying of the *mbũri cia ũcũrũ*, as already described.

The two young warriors who provided each of the slaughtered animals had the right, on this occasion, to *ringĩra* (give) the skin and the *rũcuthĩ* (the sacrum with the lumbar and caudal vertebrae attached) to two of their friends among the seniors. That is to say, they could make special presents of these things to their senior friends as a token of esteem. On the next day, each pair of junior warriors had to go and peg out the skin of their animal at the home of the man to whom they had presented it, and in return they received a hornful of fat, which they divided and kept for mixing with red ochre for their own toilet purposes.

As we have seen, the payment of the mbũri cia ndaka entitled the young warriors to start using red ochre and otherwise dandifying themselves, but they were still actually forbidden to make use of this privilege as a means to attract the attention of the girls. Many of them did so on the sly, but if any such junior warrior was found conversing with the *airitu* (unmarried, initiated girls) he was liable to severe punishment.

Having been initiated at the time of the bulrush millet planting in October of one year, and having gone through the ceremony of *gũthiga* in about April of the following year, these newest warriors were still only members of the *muumo* (the youngest and least privileged age-group), and could not participate in the dancing of the *gĩcukia*, (p.716) which took place at that time, nor could they

take part in the *mũgoiyo* dancing in the months of July and August, even though they had by then paid the *mbũri cia ndaka* fees. All that was permitted to them was to watch the dancing. Then when the dancing of the *gĩcukia* by night started about December, they were told that if they paid the next fee, the *mbũri cia gĩcukia,* they would be allowed to take part in purely local performances of that dance.

Mbũri cia Gĩcukia (*Goats or Rams for the Gĩcukia*)

When the *gicukia* dancing started about a year after the new initiation age-group was actually initiated, and at a time when yet another age-group was in the process of being initiated, the *muumo* warriors were told that if they wished to dance, they had to pay the *mbũri cia gĩcukia*. They therefore got together and collected a number of goats and rams, three or four young warriors sharing the cost of one animal. Then they offered a part of the fee to the senior warriors of the regiment age-group that was in the process of being formed, and when these animals had been accepted they were slaughtered. As in the case of the *mbũri cia ndaka*, one or two animals were sent as tribute to the complete regiment age-group that was in power, and for the rest, the division of meat was the same as that for the *mbũri cia ndaka*. The *muumo* warriors then had the right to take part in the night dancing of the *gĩcukia*, but they had to dance a little apart, and they were only allotted as partners such girls as the seniors did not want.

When the *gĩcukia* became a daylight dance on the big dancing fields, and warriors and girls from other territories came from afar, the juniors had to pay over the rest of the fee. If they failed to do so, they were not allowed to participate.

Inevitably, once the juniors had been allowed to take part in the *gĩcukia* dancing, they started to make love to the girls. However, they had to do this secretly, for if they were found out they were liable to severe punishment because they had not yet acquired this "right".

After paying the *gicukia* fee, the young warriors were also allowed to carry arms publicly. As soon as they obtained this right, they proceeded to select an emblem for their shields, for the shield of each member of a new initiation group within each territorial unit was always painted with the same emblem, so that the members of an initiation age-group knew at a glance whether any warrior was one of their own number or was a member of some other territorial unit or some other age-group.

p.717
The selection of the pattern and colours for a new initiation age-group in any territorial unit was made as follows. The junior warriors concerned all met together and various of the members put forward suggestions or shields were tentatively decorated with the pattern suggested by one person. If a pattern did not meet with general approval, another suggestion was similarly tried out. Eventually, agreement would be reached and a particular pattern (*thirata*) adopted. After this, each and every member of the *muumo* in that area decorated his shield with the design chosen.

Mbũri cia Njaga (*Goats or Rams for Nakedness*)

When the *gĩcukia* dancing came to an end, the warriors started to dance the *ngurũ* dance. The juniors were all invited to take part in this, since the *ngurũ* dancing was accompanied by many meat feasts of oxen, and the seniors were anxious to have the juniors participate so that they could make them provide a large percentage of the meat.

To start with, all the junior warriors were made to dance in their skin cloaks, instead of naked, and then, after a short time, they were told that if they wanted to dance this dance naked and in accordance with custom, they had to pay the *mbũri cia njaga*.

Only a comparatively small fee of, say, three rams among 20 or 30 warriors was demanded at this time. Then, when the *ngurũ* dancing was over and the season of the *mũgoiyo* dancing started, the matter came to a head.

The junior warriors were allowed to dance the *mũgoiyo* dance naked for one or two nights in order to "whet their appetites", and then suddenly the senior warriors turned round and said that no *muumo* warrior was to dance the *mũgoiyo* naked, but had to wear his cloak round his waist. This was a serious blow, since the whole object of the *mũgoiyo* dance was semi-sexual, and the junior warriors promptly asked what fees they were to pay for permission to dance the *mũgoiyo* without clothes. A fee was named, and the juniors went off at once to collect the required number of fat goats and sheep and hand them over the very next day in order to achieve their object.

In this case the goats and sheep handed over belonged only to the senior warriors of the regiment age-group that was in formation, and neither the regiment that was in power nor the *muumo* warriors who paid the fee received any portion of the meat.

As soon as the junior warriors had received permission to dance the *mũgoiyo* dance without restriction of any kind, they naturally started (p.718) having affairs with the girls, for the dance was designed to lead to love affairs. The senior warriors were, however, very jealous of their rights, and did their utmost to prevent the girls from becoming the lovers of the young warriors.

Mbũri cia Kĩrĩrĩ (*Goats or Rams for the Girls' Sleeping Place*)

Sooner or later the senior warriors managed to catch a few of the juniors red-handed, actually sleeping with the girls. They then immediately demanded from these individuals a ram each, which was called *mbũri ya kĩrĩrĩ*, after the payment of which the individuals might openly associate with the girls and have lovers as often as they liked.

Once this paying of the *mbũri cia kĩrĩrĩ* by individuals had started, the remaining members of the junior *muumo* group realised that if they didn't act quickly they would each have to pay a ram in this way. To avoid this they went to the seniors and arranged to make one big payment of an agreed number of rams. After this, the whole of the newly initiated warriors of the territorial area concerned, achieved full equal status with the seniors of their own regiment age-group, and shared all the rights which these seniors already enjoyed.

It will be noted that any junior warriors caught red-handed making love to the girls prior to the payment of *mbũri cia gĩcukia* were severely punished, but did not have to pay the *kĩrtrĩ* fee, whereas if similarly caught after paying the *mbũri cia gĩcukia*, they were not punished but had to pay a fee as individuals, instead of merely sharing a communal one. The difference in the treatment before and after paying the *gĩcukia* fee lay in the fact that after paying this fee the junior warriors went about armed. This meant that if the seniors attempted to punish any member of the *muumo*, the latter group were able to defend themselves and their companions by force of arms, and the seniors did not usually wish to undertake a fight with young warriors in the prime of their strength.

As soon as the members of the *muumo* had acquired full status, after paying the *mbũri cia kĩrĩrĩ*, they washed out the design of their initiation age-group that they had painted on their shields, and substituted the design of the regiment age-group into which they were now fully incorporated members. This regiment age-group design was always that originally chosen by the first initiation

age-group of the new regiment in each territory, but as each territorial unit retained its own emblem, the colours of a whole regiment over the whole of Kikuyu country varied considerably.

p.719

Fees Paid by Individuals for Special Rights

Quite apart from the fees that were paid by the members of a new initiation age-group as a whole in each territorial unit, there were certain fees that had to be paid individually by any warrior who had any ambition at all. In practice, about 80 per cent of the members of any initiation age-group paid the last two of the fees mentioned below (*mbũri ya nyambo* and *mbũri ya ndundu*), as and when they felt like doing so. It was far less common to pay the first of those described below.

Mbũri ya Kwambatĩra (*A Goat or a Ram for Promotion*)

From time to time, after all the members of a junior initiation age- group had paid the *mbũri cia ũcũrũ*, the *mbũri cia ndaka*, and the *mbũri cia gĩcukia*, one or two individual warriors wished to obtain the right to have lovers openly and to dance naked without waiting to go through normal procedure. Such warriors paid at once a fee of a ram called *mbũri ya kwambatira* (the ram for promotion). By paying it they were entitled, straight away, to the privileges of full status.

By paying this fee and thus achieving full status before the rest of their companions, they did not obtain any exemption from paying their share of the *mbũri cia njaga* and the *mbũri cia kĩrĩrĩ* fees when they became due. Thus their desire to advance to full status quickly involved them in extra expense, which the average warrior was not prepared for, as he knew that even without the extra fee he would have to pay a great deal. The *mbũri ya kwambatĩra* was therefore paid only by members of very wealthy families.

Mbũri ya Nyambo (*A Goat or Ram for Pegging Out Pegs*)

Once a warrior had reached full status and equality with the senior members of the regiment age-group to which his initiation age-group belonged, he was technically in a position to be offered the presents called *maringa* (allotted things), that is to say, the skin and the *rũcuthĩ* (sacrum with the lumbar and caudal vertebrae attached), which were normally the gift of whoever provided a ram or goat for slaughter on ceremonial occasions. If a warrior wished to be in a position to accept (p.720) such presents, he first had to pay for this privilege by presenting a ram, to such warriors in his territory as were themselves entitled to these presents. If any warrior accepted such a present before he had this fee, he was forced to go and fetch his fee within a day, and if he failed to do so, the other warriors went to his father and seized a ram to take its place.

Mbũri ya Ndundu (*A Goat or Ram for the Inner Council*)

In every ceremonial feast, such as when warriors received fees from juniors, there were certain joints which might be eaten only by those who belonged to the senior council of the warriors (*njama ya aanake*). Naturally, once a warrior had reached the status of full membership of the regiment age-group he was in a position to share in the feasts of meat derived from the fees of the next junior age-group, but if he had not paid the fee of *mbũriya ndundu*, he could eat only the legs and other less choice portions, therefore, it was not long before he decided to pay the *mbũri ya ndundu*, and thus have the right to a share of the choice joints, and to take part in the discussions of the senior warrior council.

Fees Paid by the Incomplete Junior Regiment Riika to the Senior Regiment Riika

As we have already seen, there was an interval of four and a half years between the completion of one regiment age-group and the commencement of the formation of the next. After a new regiment had started to form, and when it had a good nucleus of four or five initiation age-groups (out of the total of nine) the time was considered ripe for the new and incomplete regiment age-group to start taking over certain of the rights held by the seniors. In particular, the right to control and order the initiated girls usually passed at this time to the members of the regiment in process of formation, for they were still young, unmarried men, whereas the members of the ruling regiment were by now all married men and therefore not really interested any longer in the girls. Similarly, the right to cut open the heads of the animals slaughtered at ceremonial feasts (*gwatũra mũtwe* or *gũtinia mũtwe*), was obtained at this time, for otherwise whenever the members of the incomplete regiment age-group had a ceremonial feast they had to call (p.721) on members of the senior, complete regiment age-group to perform this service for them.

\Ve will therefore first of all consider the fees payable for the right to control the unmarried, initiated girls, and for the right to cut up the heads of slaughtered animals, after which we will consider the rights which the whole of a new regiment age-group had to acquire from the senior regiment just prior to their accession to power.

Airĩtu (*Initiated Girls*)

The right to control all unmarried, initiated girls was taken over by members of a new, partially formed regiment age-group only after at least four of its initiation age-group divisions had been completed. Thus, with the four and a half years which came between the completion of one regiment age-group and the commencement of another, the last initiation age-group of one regiment age-group had control of the girls for at least nine years, before custom demanded that they should relinquish this right.

When the time for the handing over of the girls came, the leaders of the regiment that was being formed, went to the leaders of the regiment that was in power and asked what fees were required for this purpose. This happened in each territorial unit. The usual request was for anything from 10 to 15 fat rams, so the juniors set to work to raise these among themselves, and on the appointed day their leaders handed them over. When these had been received and slaughtered, the seniors were supposed to return the forelegs of each beast to the juniors, but in practice they did not do so, but instead handed back one or two live animals, which the juniors took away to slaughter and eat in lieu of the forequarters of every beast.

By the acceptance of this fee the members of the complete regiment age-group renounced all their rights as far as the unmarried girls were concerned. From then on they might not perform the act of *kuohera nyeki* (to tie grass for, i.e. make a date with, or compel the girls to choose lovers from among themselves), nor had they a right any longer to a share in the gruel which had to be given to the warriors of the territory whenever any girl was initiated. Similarly, the seniors renounced the right to order the girls about and to make them perform such duties as cutting firewood for the fires of the *mũgoiyo* dance.

Control of the girls having thus been acquired by the four senior initiation age-groups of the new regiment age-group, this right was shared by the members of each successive initiation age-group that (p.722) went to the completion of their regiment age-group, but not until they had achieved the full status of their seniors by payment of the requisite fees.

Mũtwe (*Head—This was a Fee paid for the Right to Cut up the Heads of Slaughtered Animals*)

Having acquired control of the unmarried, initiated girls, the nucleus of the new regiment age-group proceeded to acquire the right to cut up the heads of goats and sheep slaughtered for ceremonial feasts For this purpose four or at most six of the leaders of the new regiment were appointed by the rest of the warriors to approach the leaders of the senior regiment age-group and negotiate for this right. They were told at a preliminary meeting with the leaders of the senior regiment to find a very large, fat, castrated he-goat, and also a fat ram, and to bring them, together with a new sword in a new sheath, a *mũnyoro* belt, and a brass arm ornament. They were also told to have honey beer brewed at the home of one of their parents.

On the day appointed, the four or six delegates of the regiment that was being formed took these things to the home of one of the leaders of the senior, complete regiment age-group of their territorial unit. Here they were met by eight or nine, but never more, of the leading men of the regiment age-group that was in power. That evening the he-goat was taken into the bush and eaten by the members of the two delegations. Then, early next morning, the fat ram was slaughtered at sunrise. After the meat had been eaten, the head of the ram was used to teach the delegates of the new regiment age-group how to divide a head for ceremonial occasions. These proceedings were very solemn. The head used for the demonstration had the joint called *ngata* (the atlas, or first cervical vertebra with the throat meat attached) still joined to it, and it was laid down next to the kidneys (*higo*), the spiral) anterior portion of the colon (*wei*), the spleen (*rwariũngũ*), the diaphragm (*habaya*), and the feet (*mathagiro*). The head was first cut symbolically, by pretending to cut it with a piece of *mũthakwa* wood held with a piece of *mũkengeria* stalk, and this symbolic cutting was done by the leading member of the complete, senior regiment age-group. He then took the new sword and slit the skin of the head along the lines where it was to be cut, thus marking the divisions clearly for the person who was about to cut the head in the ceremonial way for the first time.

The head had already been roasted whole with the atlas and throat (p.723) meat attached, and unlike heads that were to be eaten without ceremony, it had not been "beaten" so as to break up the bones of the cranium. The first cuts ran along either side of the nose, up and over each eye, and thence above the ears, thus leaving the nose attached to the skull (*ngũngũgũ*). Then the lower jaw was detached by cutting the skin of the cheeks. The whole head was divided into four portions (instead of the three of the normal method): one cheek with an ear and eye attached; a similar portion from the other side; the lower jaw; and the cranium with the nose, the atlas, and the throat meat attached. This done, the right ear was cut off, and the two who were participating formally in the ceremony shared it, each taking two bites while the others looked on. Then they each took two bites from the nasal portion of the *ngũngũgũ* (skull), after which each ate one of the kidneys, a piece of the spiral, anterior portion of the colon (*wei*), and a piece of each of the other joints that had been laid with the head while it was being cut.

The new sword, sheath, belt, and brass arm ornament became the property of the man who initiated the juniors into the method of ceremonially cutting the head. All the party then repaired to the homestead where honey beer had been prepared, and consumed this to complete the ceremony.

The four delegates of the regiment age-group that was being formed had now acquired the right to cut up the heads of goats and rams at the ceremonial feasts of their companions, and they might, from time to time, pass on this knowledge to any of their companions as and when they became members of the senior council of warriors by paying the *ndundu* fees. Any person wishing to acquire this knowledge, however, had to provide a further fee of a ram, on which the demonstration would be given. At such a demonstration there was no need for the head to be first cut symbolically.

Fees Paid by the Complete Junior Regiment to the Senior Regiment

We must next consider the remaining rights and privileges that had to be acquired by payment of fees once the junior regiment age-group had been completed and was ready to take over the whole control of military duties so that their predecessors could retire.

We have already seen that once a regiment age-group had been completed by the initiation of the ninth age-group of the series, the (p.724) initiation of boys was suspended for four and a half years. The order to do this was given by the leaders of the regiment age-group that had just been completed, but before they could give it they had first to acquire the right to do so. Thus they had to pay the fee that gave them control over the uninitiated boys. This was the first step in the process of *gũkũũra thĩ* (literally, to redeem the land). That is to say, they were redeeming from the regiment that was in power the control of all matters that were vested in the warriors as distinct from the council elders.

Gũkũũra Ihĩĩ (*To Redeem, or Pay for the Uninitiated Boys*)

The first step to be taken by the leaders of the new regiment age-group once it was completed by the achievement of adulthood by ninth age-group of the series was to select four of the best spokesmen in each territorial unit and send them as delegates to four of the *athamaki*, or leaders, of the retiring regiment age-group in each area. Each delegation went with a view to finding out what steps they had to take and what rites and ceremonies they had to observe in order to obtain full power.

The four senior men who were thus approached replied to the delegation, "We cannot discuss the matter with you until we have consulted some of our companions, but listen! Go and buy the fat ram or he-goat of so-and-so and also the ewe of so-and-so (mentioning beasts that they knew were really fat), and come and meet us very early the day after tomorrow with these animals at such-and-such a place in the bush". They also told the delegates to arrange for honey beer to be brewed as though for an ordinary beer feast, but without giving any indication of the purpose for which it was being prepared. To these instructions they added a request that the delegates should increase their number to nine, one to represent each initiation age- group of the new regiment. Further, they asked one of the delegates to act as their messenger to take invitations to five other members of the senior regiment who each represented different initiation age-groups in that regiment. These five were asked to visit the first four who had been approached, at once, and if they approved of the plans made, a message was sent to confirm the arrangements already made with the juniors.

On the appointed morning the two parties of nine men each representing the nine initiation age-groups of their respective regiment age-group, met in the bush. The fat ram and ewe were handed over to (p.725) the nine seniors, who proceeded to slaughter both animals. A part of the meat was eaten at once by all 18 men, but the rest was taken away to the home of one of the seniors, for any meat eaten in the bush had to be eaten before sunrise. The party then broke up and each individual went separately to the homestead where the beer had been brewed in accordance with the request made. The reason for going singly was that they did not wish to make their negotiations public, but wanted it to appear as though each had arrived at the homestead where the beer was by chance, and not by special arrangement.

When the beer had been consumed, the nine seniors told the juniors to choose a day and to call a meeting of all warriors in the territorial area concerned, both those of the senior and those of the junior regiments. They further promised that when the meeting took place they would recommend

to the senior regiment to agree to hand over the control of the initiated boys. They also told the juniors that they would have to provide at least 40 stall-fattened rams and goats (*ngoima*) as a fee.

The nine delegates of the junior regiment then proceeded to collect one animal from each member of their regiment age-group in the territorial unit, and these were used to purchase 50 really good fat animals. The reason for buying more than the 40 stipulated was in order to have a "reserve fund", should the fee be increased at the last minute, or should some of the beasts offered prove unacceptable for one reason or another.

Then on the day appointed, all the members of both regiments in the territorial area met on one of the big dancing grounds. The juniors were asked where the fee was that they were offering. They did not produce at first more than about 25 animals, and the seniors laughed and said, "If you don't mean business, go away, and let us go home again". More animals were then brought forward, and 40 out of the 50 were finally chosen and accepted as the fee.

Of these, a proportion, usually 10, were given back to the juniors, who proceeded to slaughter and eat them, while the seniors also slaughtered ten or more, keeping the others for a feast by themselves at some future date. They also selected one really fat ram and sent it as a present to the council elders belonging to the retired regiment age-group from whom they, the senior warrior regiment in power at the moment, had originally taken over.

When the feasting was over, the seniors formally renounced all further rights over the uninitiated boys and handed over this right to the new regiment age-group. As soon as they had obtained this right, the leaders of the junior regiment age-group took steps to inform the (p.726)

public that from then on, for nine planting seasons, the initiation of boys was suspended.

Gũkũũra Ūthigani (*To Pay for the Right to Scout and Spy in Enemy Territory and to Guide Raiding Parties into it*)

Having acquired authority over the young, uninitiated boys, the new regiment age-group that had been completed by the initiation of the ninth division had only one more fee to pay, and one more "right" to redeem, before they assumed full authority. After this the senior regiment would retire altogether from the state of warriorhood and its attendant responsibilities. This last right which had to be redeemed and paid for was that of military authority and the guardianship of the insignia of military control. This was called *gũkũũra ũthigani*.

As we shall see in Chapter 24, no raiding party could leave Kikuyu country and make a raid unless it was in the charge of one or more scouts (*athigani*) who not only knew Maasai country intimately, but who also had in their possession the insignia of their office, the *gĩthitũ* and *kĩnandũ* charms. In each territorial unit there were usually four or five men who were, for the time being, the appointed scouts of that area, and they always had to be members of the regiment age-group that was in power. When, therefore, a new regiment age-group had been completed and was about to take over the control of all matters affecting the warriors, steps had to be taken to transfer the right to lead raids, and the insignia of that right, to selected members of the new regiment age-group. This was carried out as follows.

First of all, four, or at most five men were chosen in every territorial unit, each from a different initiation *riika* of the new regiment age-group. These were appointed to become the scouts

(*athigani*) of the new regiment. One of them had to be a man whose mother was long past childbearing age and who was willing to forego all sex acts—even those of ceremonial significance—from then onwards. This man would become the keeper of the insignia (the *gĩthitũ* and the *kĩnandũ*), which would be housed in his mother's hut. Once these objects were put m her care she would have to abstain from all sex acts, and, in addition she would have to agree never to let the fire in her hut go out. These preliminary arrangements having been made, the four or five men designated as future raid leaders went to the present keeper of th[e] insignia and asked for a conference with him. He replied, "Go and bring me a very fat he-goat" (naming one that he knew of and which they had to go and purchase). When they returned with it they would (p.727) find that he had called in the other three or four scouts, who were his co-trustees of the insignia.

These eight or nine people then went into the bush and the he-goat was killed and eaten in secret, after which a discussion between the two parties took place. The seniors then told the juniors to go and report to their companions that the senior regiment age-group was willing to meet the junior one on an appointed day to arrange for the transfer. The juniors were warned to bring with them four very fat rams on this day as a fee.

When the meeting took place, the spokesman of the junior regiment age-group addressed the seniors and said that they now wished to take over the keeping of the insignia and the control of military matters. Their plea was supported by the scouts of the senior regiment age- group, who reported that they had had a private discussion with the men designated by the junior regiment as their future raid scouts, and that they considered them to be suitable men for the task, so the negotiations could be continued. The seniors then demanded four fat rams, which the juniors (having been forewarned) produced at once. The seniors then said, "Choose for us nine warriors, one representing each division of the new regiment age-group", and the nine men chosen withdrew and held further discussion with nine men representing the senior regiment age-group. The nine from each side included, of course, the existing scouts on one side, and the scouts designate on the other.

After discussion, which was more or less formal, an agreement was reached, and then three of the four fat rams were slaughtered and eaten ceremonially, one by the members of the junior regiment and two by the members of the senior regiment. The fourth ram was not slaughtered until the last day of the ceremonies connected with handing over the insignia.

When the meat had been consumed, the nine representatives of each regiment went into conference again, and the juniors were given specific instructions as to what they had to do. They were told to procure a big he-goat, which, on a given date, the four or five designate scouts would bring to the seniors, together with some honey beer. The seniors would then go with the juniors to the medicine-man they (the senior scouts) had been in the habit of consulting as to the omens concerning raids, and would formally introduce the new designate scouts to him, so that he would know that they were now being given the military control.

On the appointed day, the four or five representatives of each regiment age-group in each territorial unit concerned met and went (p.728) together to this special seer, taking the he-goat and some honey beer The keeper of the insignia had to take the insignia with him. The he-goat was slaughtered and the medicine-man solemnly cut two rawhide strips from its skin. Removing the old, dry strips that were on the *gĩthitũ* and on the *kĩnandũ* (the insignia of office), he replaced them with the new ones. He thereby showed that he gave his blessing to the transfer of the insignia, which was to take place in a few days' time.

This done, the medicine-man sat with the senior men, facing the juniors, who were also seated. The future keeper of the insignia sat opposite the keeper who was shortly to retire. The medicine-man and the four seniors then blessed the juniors by spitting beer over them. The keeper-designate had the insignia put into his hands. He put his sandals with them, and some Kikuyu grass (*nyeki ya kĩgombe*) and he was blessed by the medicine-man and the present keeper of the insignia. The latter then took back the insignia, as he had to retain charge of them for two days longer until the final handing over ceremony took place.

When the ceremony with the medicine-man was over, the participants dispersed after the juniors had been instructed to meet the seniors again on the next morning in the bush at a given spot. The keeper-designate of the insignia was also given instructions about certain preparations that were to be made at his home. His mother was to prepare a special brew of fresh castor oil, and his father was to make a special brew of honey beer, and also to have some fresh sugarcane beer in readiness. Meanwhile, the seniors rendered down some of the fat of the he-goat slaughtered at the seer's home so that it was also in readiness for the final ceremonies.

When, on the evening of the next day, the juniors met the seniors in the bush, the fat ram that had been kept for the purpose was slaughtered, and all its fat was put into the skin, together with a pelvic bone with part of the leg meat attached (*rũhonge*), the fourth chamber of the stomach (*ngerima*), and part of the intestines (*mara*). The rest of the meat was eaten in the bush by the men. When they had finished, one of the juniors, other than the keeper-designate, was told to take the skin, fat, and other joints to the mother of the latter. He did this later on in the night, and warned her once more that the ceremony would take place at her home in the morning.

Early next morning the woman's husband took some of the beer, and in addition to the usual prayers to the ancestral spirits, he prayed to God for a blessing on the ceremony that was going to take place. He prayed especially that his son, who was to become the keeper of the insignia, might be blessed in his new duties and not harmed by them. (p.729) Then the senior scouts, and the junior ones, arrived. As soon as they had assembled, the honey beer was poured off into gourds, and one *kĩnya* gourdful was taken by the seniors, who went off to fetch the insignia. Having arrived at the hut of the mother of the present keeper, they called her out and gave her the gourd of honey beer and the dried and the dressed skin of one of the rams slaughtered earlier in the proceedings. Having received these presents, she went into her hut and brought out the insignia—the *gĩthitũ* and the *kĩnandũ*—and handed them over to her son.

He was then escorted back by his companions. When they reached the home of the keeper-designate, they stood at the entrance of the homestead and called upon the man's mother to come out with a winnowing tray, upon which they placed the insignia. This was then carried into the courtyard. The seniors, on their way from the home where the insignia had been kept up to this time, had picked some Kikuyu grass and tied it to each of their cloaks at the corner over the left shoulder, and they also had more bunches of this grass in their hands.

Having entered the courtyard, they sat down on stools, and the young men who were going to take over the insignia sat down on other stools facing them. The seniors then tied bunches of grass to the insignia and took off their sandals and put them on the tray together with the sandals of the young men.

A small quantity of honey beer was brought out in a bottle gourd and given to the seniors, the rest of the beer being left in the hut until later. At this time the insignia was "freshened" by refilling the *kĩnandũ*, an oil gourd, the essential contents of which were some castor oil, some fat of the he-

goat that had been slaughtered, some blood of the same animal, some honey beer from the bottle gourd, some fresh honey, and several powders such as *ũũmũ*.

After this the insignia were handed ceremonially to the keeper-designate, his three or four companions stretching out their hands to touch it as well, so as to be associated with him in the ceremony of transfer. The seniors then filled a horn with beer from the bottle gourd, sipped it, and all together spat it out over the insignia and the pairs of sandals. As they did so they said:

Gĩthitũ kĩromwenda!	May the *gĩthitũ* charm love you!
Mũroendwo nĩ itaha!	May spoils love you! i.e. may you be lucky in obtaining them.
Mũroendwo nĩ ng'ombe!	May cattle love you! i.e. may you be able to raid and bring them home! (p.730)
Mwataha ng'ombe, ciĩtĩkagĩre.	When you raid cattle may they be willing to be driven off, i.e. go with you willingly.
Na aanake maataagarara,	And if the young men step over the charm,
Matikae kũgurara.	Let them not be wounded.

The seniors then reclaimed their sandals and formally handed back those of the juniors, who got up and walked to the door of the hut with the insignia and handed them over to the mother of the new keeper. She took them and hung them on a specially prepared hanging post of *mũthakwa* wood by the storeroom at the head of her bed.

Now the father of the keeper was handed the bottle gourd of beer, and he blessed the post where the insignia were hanging by pouring out honey beer at the foot of it, both from a horn, and from a gourd drinking cup. At the same time he called on God, the family ancestral spirits, and the spirits of all departed scouts to come and give their blessing. The woman then scattered finger millet grain by the post and her husband anointed the post with *ira* powder.

This done, the seniors called the juniors, escorted them out into the bush beyond the homestead entrance, and picked Kikuyu grass for them. They tied it to the juniors' cloaks and put more in their hands, thus symbolizing that the juniors were now in charge. Then they all returned to the courtyard, where the rest of the honey beer was brought out, and the seniors sat down again on their stools. The juniors placed the gourds of beer on their laps saying, "*Nĩtwagũra ũthigani na ũũkĩ ũyũ*". (We buy the right to lead raids with this honey beer). Some of the beer was given to the father and mother of the new keeper, some to the junior warriors, who on this occasion had to drink it, and the rest was consumed by the seniors.

This concluded the ceremony of handing over, and the opportunity was taken to warn the junior warriors that their sandals that had been blessed were never to be worn inside any hut lest they should come in contact with the dung of children (who sometimes defiled huts). Before departing, the seniors arranged with the new keeper of the insignia and one of his companions to prepare food for a journey and to meet the ex-keeper and one companion on the next day but one, so that they might be taken into Maasai country and be shown all the secret routes, hiding places, and spying places which the seniors had used when spying upon and raiding the Maasai. They were also taught at this time their duties as scouts of the new regiment age-group for their territorial unit.

On the day fixed, the four men set out, the insignia being carried by (p.731) the new keeper, and they spent four or five days in Maasai country, the juniors learning all the lore that the seniors could impart to them. If they were lucky, this expedition resulted in their locating the enemy in some position favourable to attack, in which case they hurried back to the medicine-man to find out how the omens were, and, if they were favourable, organised a minor raid at once.

If they did not locate the enemy in a suitable position on this occasion, the ex-keeper of the insignia and his companions went periodically into Maasai land with the new keeper until such time as they were successful, for by custom the new scouts were not to be left to do spying by themselves until the joint spying of the ex-keeper and the present keeper and their two companions had led to a successful raid. After this had been accomplished the senior retired from the work altogether.

In some areas, there was a minor variation in the order of the proceedings as described above, and the handing over of the insignia to the scouts of the new regiment age-group preceded the ceremony of taking them to be introduced to and blessed by the medicine-man. Apart from this variation in the order of events, the ceremonies were the same in every territorial unit of South Kikuyu.

It was regarded as absolutely essential that there should always be a keeper of the insignia and a guardian (his mother) in perfect health. If, therefore, the woman who was guardian of the insignia was taken ill at any time, the insignia had to be removed from her custody. If the woman had a co-wife who was also past childbearing and who was prepared to undertake this duty, the insignia were transferred to her hut and no great ceremony other than the slaughter of a goat was necessary. If, however, the guardian had no co-wife who could assume her duties and act as mother to the keeper, then a new keeper had to be selected by the regiment leaders, and the insignia transferred to the guardianship of his mother. Such a transfer necessitated the performance of all the ceremonies that accompanied the transfer from one regiment age-group to another, except that there was no fee involved. The former keeper then became merely an assistant to the new keeper.

If the young warrior who was keeper of the insignia fell ill, he could retain the office, but the insignia itself had to be transferred immediately to another warrior as described above. Slight colds, headaches, vomiting, etc. of a temporary nature, did not count as "illness" in any of the above cases, only serious illness which looked as though it might he prolonged, or even fatal.

When the members of the newly completed regiment age-group in each of the various territorial units took over the military authority (*ũthigani*), they acquired full authority and power, and the senior (p.732) regiment retired altogether from all matters that belonged by custom to the warrior class. As soon as this happened, the time had come for the new regiment age-group to arrange its first *kwarahũka kwa njama*, or parade throughout the country, to promulgate such rules and laws as it was in their power to make. This was carried out as follows.

***Kwarahũka kwa Njama* (*The Parade of Warriors throughout the Country*)**

The choice of the time when the whole of the warriors of the new regiment should parade through the country from Ngong to the Ithanjĩ River was always left to the leaders of the territorial unit on the southern boundary. (The Ngong Hills were regarded as the southern boundary of South Kikuyu, and the Ithanjĩ River, flowing west to east, lay midway between the northern and southern boundaries.) This was due to the fact that it was of the utmost importance that this parade should not take place when the Maasai armies were anywhere near, for the parade would involve the temporary absence of every single warrior from his home, and if the Maasai were near, they would be certain to seize this opportunity for a raid into Kikuyu territory on a big scale. When the scouts of the southernmost territorial unit informed the leaders of the warriors in that unit that the moment was propitious, as the Maasai were nowhere near, the leaders gave orders, "*Njama yarahũke*". (Let the body of warriors arise and be active). This was a signal for every warrior of that territory to arm himself fully and proceed to the biggest dancing ground in the territory.

Plate 11. A Kikuyu warrior. Note the spear and club, head-dress and necklace of gourd tops.

Having been thus mobilised, the warriors spent the day dancing in the unusual way called *kũrũũga ndũũgo* (jumping high jumps), and singing the *njama* songs. They then divided into small bands and passed through the whole of the territory, visiting every single homestead, demanding stall-fattened beasts from every man whom they considered to be mean (*wa ũkarĩ*), jealous (*wa ũiru*), or guilty of any other offence against society, including in the case of young married warriors, a man not allowing his wife to have intercourse with the other men of his age-group (see Chapter 19).

During this night every warrior had the right to make any unmarried girl he liked, sleep with him in the restricted form of intercourse known as *nguĩko*. On the following morning all the warriors reassembled on the dancing fields fully armed and prepared to move on to the next ridge.

(p.733)
On this next ridge, as soon as it was known that the body of warriors (*njama*) of the first ridge were preparing to mobilise, the leaders of the warriors had started making plans, and in the morning they sent a delegation down to the stream which separated the two ridges. This delegation took a fat ram, which they slaughtered at the point where the public pathway, or big travellers' path (*njĩra ya agendi*) crossed the river. They sprinkled the stomach contents from the ram on to the path and awaited the warriors of the other ridge. When the warrior regiment from the first ridge arrived, they welcomed them in the name of their companions, and the newcomers then crossed the stream, and each dipped his feet in the stomach contents before passing on. When the whole band had crossed, they were escorted by the delegates to the dancing field where all the other warriors of the ridge had assembled.

The newcomers sat down there, and the warrior leaders of this second ridge assigned one of their own warriors to each newcomer as a guide, though if the newcomers outnumbered the home warriors each guide had several charges to look after.

The leaders of the newcomers were taken charge of by the leaders of the home unit, and then the whole assembly broke up and the newcomers were taken by their hosts to their homes. The dancing and revelries of the first day were repeated, except that the home warriors acting as hosts did not sleep with any of the girls of this territory themselves, but arranged for each guest to have a girl to sleep with for the night. If any warrior who was host was married, he arranged for his wife to sleep with one of the guest warriors of his own initiation age-group (see Chapter 19), in accordance with the recognised rules and customs.

At every homestead where the guests were housed for the night, a ram was slaughtered as food for the guests and hosts. From each animal thus killed one *rũcuthĩ* (sacrum with the lumbar and caudal vertebrae attached), one *rũhonge* (a pelvic bone with part of the leg meat attached), and the *mũromo wa ihu* (ventral sac of the rumen) were laid aside, and were taken next day to the fields of assembly and handed over to the leaders.

In refraining from any sex acts themselves on this night and instead providing sexual entertainment for their guests, the hosts were not denying themselves much, for on the next day and each successive day they would be the guests of warriors of the successive territorial areas, and would themselves be entertained in this way.

On the following morning all the warriors of the territorial unit concerned, both hosts and guests, met fully armed on the dancing field and prepared to move to the next ridge (or territorial unit), where they were met as before by a delegation who sacrificed a ram at the crossing (p.734) of the stream, and the same procedure was carried out again. And so the whole company of warriors, increasing in number each day, moved through the country until they reached the Ithanjĩ River, the half-way line of South Kikuyu country. Here the warriors of the southern half of South Kikuyu stopped. They were met by the warriors of the first territorial unit beyond the Ithanjĩ River, who then initiated a second movement from the Ithanjĩ River to the Chania.

The movement of the warriors across the country thus served the purpose of letting everyone know that the new regiment had taken over the authority from their predecessors, as everywhere they went they exacted fines from any person having a reputation for being antisocial.

Having arrived at the Ithanjĩ River, the leaders of the territorial units held a big conference and decided upon the new rules and laws which they were going to promulgate. Having decided upon them "in committee", they laid them before the whole body of warriors for approval. Similarly, the movement which started at the Ithanjĩ River decided upon rules and laws for its area when they reached the Chania. Having decided and agreed upon the rules and laws to be implemented during their term of office, the whole body started to move back across the country, and as each territorial unit was reached, the warriors of that unit were left behind, save for a small delegation of four leaders, who accompanied the homeward bound party back to the starting point of the movement on the southern boundary.

On this return journey no animals were slaughtered, but the whole party was fed with agricultural produce by the women and girls of the unit concerned, who had had plenty of warning and time to prepare large quantities of gruel, etc. At length, the warriors of the southernmost territorial unit arrived back in their own territory accompanied by four leaders from every other territorial unit as far as the Ithanjĩ River. The whole company of leaders then set about performing the ceremony of *kũringa thenge*, in order to give effect to the rules and laws that had been agreed upon.

To prepare for the ceremony, representatives of the council elders were sent for and a joint conference was held with them at which the warriors informed the elders of the rules and laws which they had decided to impose. The elders had the right to veto or amend any rule or law which they considered to be unsatisfactory, but usually they accepted them without demur. Agreement having been reached, a small young male goat had to be found for the ceremony. This had to be an animal without any living relatives, i.e. an animal that was not descended from, nor had begotten, any Kikuyu stock (*karũhĩ gatarĩ kĩruka*). (p.735) It was therefore always an animal that had been raided from the Maasai, and that had either been castrated at once or was too young to have served any female goats. This animal was taken by the representatives of the elders and the delegates of the warriors to a chosen point beyond the furthest Kikuyu cultivation.

Plate 12. Kikuyu warrior showing hair style.

Here four elders bound it up alive with roots of the plant called *muoha-akuũ* (the same plant that was used for binding a dead human body at burial), and laid it upon ground that was bare, stony and not fruitful. The delegates of the warriors and elders formed a big circle round it, and then one elder approached it and began the actual ceremony of *kũringa thenge* by picking up a big stone and saying, "*Ūkabi ũtahaga ng'ombe ciitũ ũrokua ũguo*" (May the Maasai who raid our cattle die thus). As he said this he threw the stone on to the bound goat. Then, taking another stone, he said, "*Ikamba matahaga aka aitũ marokua ũguo*" (May the Akamba who raid our women die thus). These two curses were followed by yet a third: "*Mũthigani ũũkaga gũthigana ũhiũ witũ arokuo ũguo*" (Let any scout who comes to spy out our stock die thus).

Having uttered these three curses as a preliminary, the elder who was casting the stones at the goat proceeded to recite each of the new rules and laws, casting a stone at the goat as he voiced each one. He started with the two laws which each new regiment always reissued, the first being, "*Mũthuuri ũkaruithia ihĩĩ itathirĩte imera kenda arokua ũguo*" (Any elder who causes boys to be initiated before nine planting seasons shall have passed, let him die thus). The second, also referring to the initiation of boys, was, "*Mũthuuri ũkaiya kĩhĩĩ gĩake athiĩ amũhithie Metumi, twaga kũmũnina na indo ciake ciothe, tũrokua ũguo*" (If any elder steals a march on us and takes his son north to be initiated in Central Kikuyu, if we fail to kill him and destroy all his property, may we die thus). Then followed any other laws which had been decided upon.

At the last occasion when this ceremony was performed, in about 1892, when the *Njenga* regiment age-group took over, the other laws includcd the following: "*Mariika marĩa manyinyi ma riika riitũ, mũndũ ũkanyua njohi ihĩĩ itanarua arokua ũguo*" (As for the junior initiation age-groups of our regiment, if any member of them drinks beer at all before the boys are again initiated, let him die thus). Other laws prorogated at the same time made death the penalty for any Kikuyu who stole from a fellow Kikuyu, for any Kikuyu who used witchcraft (*ũrogi*) in an illegal manner, and for any person trying to influence a girl not to marry the man she had chosen and agreed to have as her husband. When these and any other laws had been thus proclaimed, a final stone was hurled at the goat's head, crushing its skull so that it died.

Plate 13. Kikuyu warrior with long hair.

p.736

While this ceremony was proceeding, four elders were slaughtering a young ewe, and had taken its stomach contents and sprinkled them all round the assembled people, so that when they dispersed, each had to step on some of this and so be purified.

The people then departed, leaving four or five elders and four or five of the leaders of the warriors (nine men in all were necessary), who took the carcass of the goat thus killed and hide it either in a hole in some rocks or in a hollow tree trunk, but in such a way that hyenas could not get at it. This was essential, for after nine planting seasons were over, and before boys' initiations could start again, the carcass had to be unearthed and such curses as affected the boys, revoked by special ceremony.

When the ceremony was over, the four delegates from each territorial unit went off at once to their own area, where a goat was slaughtered by the senior elders of that area, and a rawhide strip put upon each delegate's right-hand middle finger, as well as on the fingers of the two elders who so purified the warriors.

This done, the warrior leader of each territorial unit arranged for a *kĩbaata* assembly and dance to take place (see Chapter 11). At this *kĩbaata* dance the four delegates repeated the laws that had been promulgated at the *kũringa thenge* ceremony, so that no one throughout the country could afterwards say that he was ignorant of the laws that had been made, or claim any leniency if he broke those laws on the grounds that he had not known what the penalty was or that it was too severe. Such an announcement made at *kĩbaata* assemblies was called a *mũiguithio* (a making understood, a public announcement).

In the manner described above, each new regiment age-group made its laws on obtaining power, and announced them to the public. Moreover, at any time during their term of office they could

announce further laws only by this same method: first parading, then taking oaths on a goat, and finally holding *kĩbaata* dances to make the new laws widely known.

We have seen that care was taken to see that such a movement of warriors took place only when there was little risk of attack from the Maasai. However, the Maasai had their own spy system, and on at least one occasion still remembered at the time of this study, the occasion of *mũtharĩko wa gwa Gĩcamũ* (the invasion at Gĩcamũ's) the Maasai made a raid when all the warriors were up at the Ithanjĩ River. They penetrated about ten miles into Kikuyu country before the warriors got the news, abandoned their plans, rushed back to fight, and routed the enemy, who were not expecting them so soon.

Apart from announcing new laws, the warriors sometimes paraded (p.737) through the country simply to punish people who had broken the laws of the land, both those made by themselves and those made by the elders. Upon arriving at a territorial unit on such occasions, they consulted with the council elders, who reported cases of illegal use of witchcraft (*ũrogi*), and the warriors proceeded to punish the offenders (see Chapter 23).

The *Mbũgua* regiment age-group mobilised for parades nine times during their term of office, and their successors, the *Njenga* regiment age-group, had already paraded five times before this custom was stopped by the British Government in 1902.

Having dealt in some detail with the customs of warriors and the way in which the males of a newly initiated age-group gradually acquired full status and equal rights with their seniors, we must examine the similar customs as far as newly initiated girls were concerned.

Acquiring Rights as a Newly Initiated Girl

Kũruga Mote (*To Cook Thick Porridge Made of Bulrush Millet*)

In every territorial unit, as soon as the girls of a new initiation *riika* had come out of the novice stage (*thiga*), they were entitled to anoint themselves with red ochre without the payment of any special fee. However, they were not allowed by the senior girls to take any part in dancing until every one of them had paid the fee of *kũruga mote*.

Instead of the whole band of newly initiated girls being made to produce this fee on the same day, they had to provide it individually, and each girl in turn was called upon by the seniors to *ruga mote* (cook *mote*). The *mote* itself was a thick porridge made from bulrush millet. Every girl had to provide a big half-gourd of this. In addition she had to prepare two *kĩnya* gourds of gruel, two half-gourds of pigeon peas, a half-gourd of *kĩmere* (a dish made with various millets), a large quantity of ripe bananas, and a big half-gourd of edible arum roots.

In the preparation of this feast every newly initiated girl was helped by her initiation age-group companions, and when all was ready the senior girls of the territorial areas concerned were invited to the feast. They always gave back a small portion of each dish to the juniors to share among themselves, and if any warriors were visiting that homestead in the evening when the feast was in progress, they were told to go the men's hut, and thither the senior girls would take them a share of the food.

p.738
When the feast was over the senior girls danced the *ndumo* dance while the juniors looked on, or, if the latter had already learned the steps and the songs, they danced it themselves in a little group apart.

Once every junior girl in the territorial unit had paid the *ruga mote* fee, they were admitted all together to the *nduumo* dancing with the seniors. Having paid this fee they could also attend the mixed dances of warriors and maidens, and even dance the dances with the senior warriors without any objections being raised.

Kũrĩa Mũhothi (*To eat what had been collected*)

As soon as all the *muumo* (newly initiated) girls had obtained the right to take part in the dances, they were anxious to achieve full equal status with the senior girls in order that they might enjoy the other privileges, in particular, the right to link little fingers with the senior girls, the right to use the special hand-clapping type of greeting used between girls, and the right to have *nguĩko* (restricted intercourse) with the warriors.

Plate 14. Kikuyu warrior, wearing sword and sheath.

In order to acquire these rights, the *muumo* girls were required by their seniors to pay a fee called *mũhothi* (a collection), which was consumed at a ceremonial feast called *kũrĩa mũhothi*. For this feast every junior girl had to persuade her family to let her have yams, sugar-cane, and ripe bananas. The juniors brought their fees together to a place in the bush selected by the seniors, and in the late afternoon the feast began, with the juniors acting as servants to the seniors and peeling the yams, preparing the sugar-cane, etc.

This feast might not be witnessed by any male, and if one came near he was warned to go away. If he did not do so, he would certainly die within a month, for any girl, if she saw men watching the feast, would drop what she was eating, an act which constituted a very severe curse indeed, and one from which there was no means of purification. A short time after the feast provided by the juniors, the seniors in their turn provided one of these feasts for girls only, to which they invited the juniors. With this act the juniors were acknowledged as equals, and when the feast was over the seniors proceeded to teach the juniors the special forms of hand-clapping that were used in greetings, how to link little fingers, and how to perform the restricted sex act known as *nguĩko*.

This latter was shown them by means of a practical demonstration in which one of the senior girls acted the part of the man. Each young girl had to be taught by a senior who was not related to her. The (p.739) senior girl first of all showed the young girl how to fasten her skirt and pubic apron in such a way that the male could not touch her genitalia either with his hand or with his penis. She then made the young girl lie on the ground and showed her how to place her legs, and how to hold a man who was sleeping with her. Such demonstrations were not regarded as a form of lesbianism,

but simply as instruction, and no shame attached either to the teacher or the pupil for acting thus. The instruction was always given either at night out in the bush beyond the entrance to the homestead, or else inside a woman's hut during the day when everyone was out. It was regarded as very important indeed that every junior girl should be adequately instructed in the correct way to perform *nguĩko*, for any failure to observe the correct method and the rules was believed to cause misfortune and uncleanness.

To start with, the girl had to lie on her left side with her left leg stretched out flat on the sleeping mat and her right leg bent and raised with the knee in the air. The left arm was also kept flat on the sleeping mat, the right arm being kept free for encircling the man's neck. When the man lay down he had to do so in such a way that his right leg rested on the girl's left leg. Then she brought her right leg over and enfolded both his legs under her right knee. She then rolled her trunk so that her breasts faced upwards; the man brought his chest down on to her breasts, and she encircled his neck with her right arm, thus helping to keep him in position. The man's penis was pressed against the girl's soft pubic apron. When the couple got too stiff in this position, they turned over and lay on the other side in a corresponding position, with the girl on her right side and the man on his left.

Neither the man nor the girl might touch the genitalia of the other with the hands, and this fact was sternly impressed upon the young girls by their teachers. To do so involved the sacrifice of a ram and purification by a medicine-man, if death was to be avoided. This in turn involved letting other people know that you had broken the law, so the law was reasonably well observed.

Instructing the Junior Warriors in Nguĩko

Not only were the senior girls required to teach the junior girls the technique of restricted sexual intercourse known as *nguĩko*, but it was also their task to teach the young warriors. As soon as the warriors had paid the fees entitling them to full status (and often months before) the senior girls started to take them aside and to teach them how to perform *nguĩko* properly.

p.740
Other Instruction Given by Senior Girls to Junior Girls

Once the junior girls had been admitted to equal status by the seniors the latter taught them certain aspects of personal hygiene. They learned, for instance, how to pull out all their pubic hairs, for this hair was never to be shaved off, but only pulled out by thumb and finger They were also taught that if at any time their menses should start while they were sleeping with a warrior, they were to continue with him for the rest of the night, but early next morning they had to get fresh cow dung, and with this anoint the man on any part of his body that had come into contact with the menstrual flow.

They learned, too, that the restricted sex act known as *nguĩko* was not a thing which they were to be ashamed of or shy about, and in fact, that it was good for several couples to have *nguĩko* in the same big *kĩrĩrĩ* (the girls' sleeping place). The girls were warned that as they were no longer children they might on no account touch their own genitalia except to wash them, and that masturbation was a shameful thing which could bring evil both to themselves and to their future husbands.

Occupations of the Warriors

Although it must be admitted that the warriors devoted a great deal of time to their toilets, to dancing, and to meat feasts, it must not be thought that they spent a life of idleness. The principal task of the warriors was warfare. Their duty was to defend the country against raids by the Maasai

and the Akamba, and to carry warfare into Maasai country and so enrich themselves and their families with the spoils of war. Even when no raid was imminent, it was necessary that the warrior class should be constantly ready for war, for if the Maasai spies ever found that a large proportion of the warriors was engaged in other tasks, they raided at once, knowing that they would meet with no organised resistance. In spite of this, the warrior classes did undertake a certain amount of work for the community and for their families.

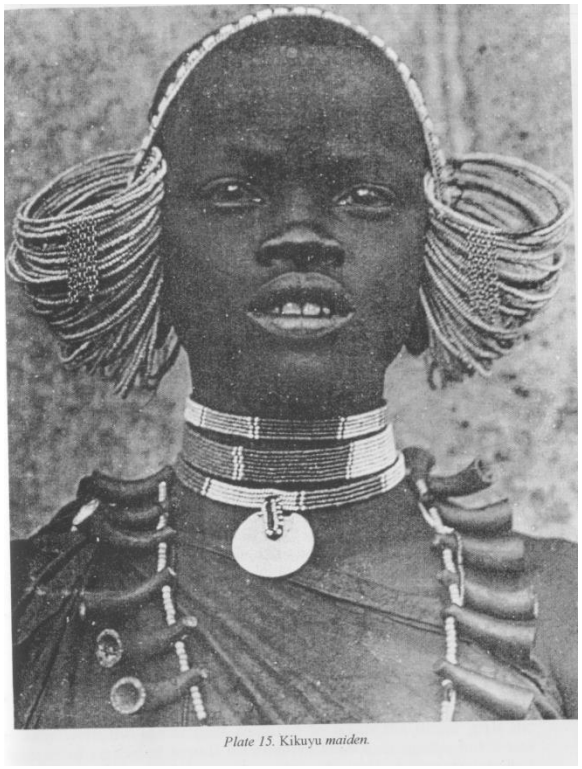

Plate 15. Kikuyu *maiden.*

Every year each warrior was expected to assist in bush-clearing for fresh cultivation areas, and to help the married men in the work of hoeing with *mũnyago* digging sticks (sharpened poles), work which women could not do. All warriors also had to take a share in the herding of cattle and sheep, for there was always the chance of the (p.741) stock being attacked by lion or leopard, or of a small Maasai band crossing the frontier unobserved and attempting a small-scale raid. Every warrior, too, was expected to build himself a bachelor hut behind his mother's hut, and although he could call in his friends, male and female, to help him, he had to initiate the work himself and do most of it.

After being in the warrior ranks for some years, most warriors got married and added family duties to their other tasks. Once married they also started to attend the discussions of the council elders, as onlookers and audience, in order to learn the technique of debate and the knowledge of Kikuyu law and custom that they would need later when they ceased to be mere married warriors and became council elders of the first grade.

After a time, and while still warriors and liable for active service, they could pay fees which enabled them to become first and even second grade elders, and often, by the time they were superseded by a new regiment age-group, many of the warriors of the senior regiment age-group were fully qualified third grade elders as well, and very occasionally grandfathers! To the Kikuyu this was perfectly normal and acceptable, for it was clearly understood that, although the members of a senior regiment age-group were in power until superseded as already described, they were not required to function as active soldiers once the new regiment age-group that was eventually to supersede them had reached a numerical strength adequate for all normal military service needs.

Occupations of the Initiated Girls

Although the initiated girls also spent a good deal of time dancing and preparing for dances, they had many other tasks to occupy their time, indeed, their chances for good marriages depended upon the way in which they applied themselves to these tasks, for no young man, however much he loved a girl, would be allowed to marry her if his parents considered the girl of his choice to be lazy or incompetent. As a result, girls considered it more important to earn the reputation of being hard workers than of good dancers, or good-lookers.

All girls were expected to help their mothers in the women's work of fields and in all household duties, and during the daytime they could only lay these duties aside and devote themselves to dancing if their mothers consented. At night, however, they could do as they (p.742) liked, and most evenings and nights were spent either in dancing or flirting.

Among other duties that the initiated girls had to perform was that of shaving the heads of warriors whenever they were called upon to do so. Also, those warriors who had the authority could order the girls to cut firewood for a *mũgoiyo* dance, or to do any other similar tasks, and their order was considered overriding, and even more important than any order given by a girl's own mother.

Gũthiĩ Thigari (*To Go About Together*)

It was customary for both warriors and girls to form very special friendships with certain members of their own sex. This was called *gũthiĩ thigari*. A man or a girl who had formed this type of friendship with another would never go anywhere—to a dance, to a feast, or on a visit—without informing his or her friend, and people who were joined by such friendships commonly walked about with their little fingers linked together, this being a token of the deepest friendship.

Ceremonies for an Initiated Girl at her First Menses

As we have already emphasised, it was customary among the Kikuyu for a girl to be initiated before her first menses, and it was considered a great calamity for her should she menstruate before she had been initiated.

In the event of this happening, the ceremony of *kuoera mwana* (to perform the ceremonies connected with a girl's first menses, literally— to pick up [the menses] for one's child) would never be performed for her, and when at some later date she married, she would have to have a special purification ceremony performed for her after the marriage had been consummated and she had started normal life with her husband. In the great majority of cases, however, girls were initiated before reaching puberty and so were entitled to have the ceremony of *kuoera mwana* performed for them.

When an initiated girl of the Kikuyu guild started her first menses, whether in her mother's hut, or outside but not too far away, she immediately reported the fact to her mother. She was then secluded in her mother's hut until the flow of blood was over, after which she was made to wash herself in the hut with water brought by her mother.

p.743
Meanwhile, the mother reported to the girl's father that his daughter's first menses had started and that he had to be very careful not to have sexual contact with any of his wives (including the girl's own mother), or with any other woman, until the period of seclusion was over. Then when he had been informed that the girl had washed herself, he had to go to the girl's mother that same night, and have ceremonial sexual intercourse with her twice. This was called *kuoera mwana*, and concluded the ceremony in such straightforward cases.

It not infrequently happened, however, that an initiated girl of the Kikuyu guild had her first menses while some distance from home, and not fully realising what she was doing, buried the blood that came with the first flow, went and washed in a river, and then came home and told her mother what had happened. This was a serious matter, for by her act of burying the blood and by washing it off in the river, she had "caused it to be lost". In such circumstances the girl was secluded until the period was over, and then her father took steps for the more complicated ceremony of *kuoera mwana na mbũri* (to pick up [the menses] of the child with a sheep).

On the day which he had fixed for the ceremony, the father led a ram into the girl's mother's hut, where the girl had been secluded. Then, accompanied by the girl and her mother, he led the ram down to the nearest stream. The girl's mother carried a brand-new gourd. At the stream the ram was made to stand in the flowing water, and water was poured all over it with the new half-gourd until it was soaking wet. The father proceeded to lead the ram up the hill to the homestead again, the girl's mother following behind and at intervals holding out her half-gourd to catch some of the drops of water that were dripping from the soaked animal. Every few paces she collected the earth from one of the ram's footprints and put this also in the half-gourd. Further, at every point where another path crossed the one they were following he picked up dust and earth and put this into the gourd.

When they reached home, the ram was solemnly led into the mother's hut and then out again, after which it was slaughtered in front of the hut. As soon as it had been cut open, and before the stomach was cut up, some of the stomach juices were squeezed out of the "mouth of the stomach" into the half-gourd, and when the stomach had been opened up, the undigested contents (*taatha*) were taken out and the juice from them also squeezed into the half-gourd, which now contained earth, water, and stomach juices.

The father then placed two bunches of leaves, one consisting of four *mũgumo* tree twigs, and another of four *mũtei* twigs, into the half-gourd, and this was taken into the girl's mother's hut. The meat of the animal (p.744) was then cut up. Part of it was roasted, and the rest was boiled, and all of it was eaten by the members of the family at once. The bones, stomach contents, and other waste was put into a big cooking pot which was placed inside the hut for the night.

After the meat had all been eaten, the girl, her mother, and any of the mother's other children who had not yet been through the second birth ceremony, went into the hut and stood together in front of, and facing, the mother's bed. The girl's father joined them, and he handed the half-gourd with its contents to his wife to hold. He then took the two bunches of leaves, and starting at the back of the little group, brushed them all from head to heel twice, with the mixture from the half-gourd. He then came round and stood between them and the bed and repeated the process. The half-gourd and the bunches of leaves were placed at the head end of the mother's bed, and the girl and her brothers and sisters who had not yet been born again retired to the girls' bed. The girl's mother and father had ceremonial sexual intercourse twice that night, and on the following morning the contents of the cooking pot were thrown away by the mother.

The customs connected with the first menses of an Ũkabi initiation guild girl were different in all respects. If such a girl started her first menses in her mother's hut, there was no special ceremony, and the father did not have to have ceremonial sexual intercourse with the girl's mother on the day that the girl's period came to an end. He had, however, to take care not to have intercourse at all with any woman until the girl's flow of blood had stopped, and then before he started normal life again he had to see to it that his first act of sexual intercourse was with the girl's mother.

If, on the other hand, an initiated girl of the Ũkabi guild had her first menses away from home, and buried the blood or washed it off in the river, the ceremony of purifying her from uncleanness was much more complicated than the ceremony of kuoera mwana na mbũri, as practised by the Kikuyu initiation guild people.

The girl's father fixed a day for the ceremonies to take place and summoned a medicine-man to come and take charge of the purification. When the medicine-man arrived, the girl's father slaughtered a ram in front of the mother's hut, and while he was doing this, the medicine-man

proceeded to *tahĩkia* (ceremonially purify) the girl and her mother. Any children who had not been born again had to be associated with the mother during this process. This *tahĩkia* ceremony was carried out with water and powders from the medicine-man's outfit, and not with the stomach contents of the ram, which were needed for the rest of the ceremony.

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When the ram had been killed, some of its stomach juices were squeezed straight into a new half-gourd and laid aside. The rest of the stomach contents were put into a big cooking pot. The medicine-man then went out and collected the following plants: *mũhoroha, njogu ya iria, ng'ondu ya kĩondo, gacuuru, ũrutĩ, mũrerema, mũtharia-ndundu,* the leaves of a *mũkũyũ* and a *mũgumo,* sweet potato leaves and vines, edible arum roots and leaves, and the young shoot of a banana plant of the *mũtahato* species. All except the *mũrerema* the medicine-man put into the cooking pot with the stomach contents, to which he added a little cold water. The pot was marked in four places with *ira* powder and was then bound round the neck with the *mũrerema* creeper.

The girl and her mother now came and sat down near the fire where the sacrificial meat had been roasted, and the medicine-man passed the cooking pot once round them, and put it on the fire saying, "*Ndahagĩra thahu ũrĩa waingĩrire mwana*" (I put onto the fire the uncleanness which came into the child). Then he took it off and said, "*Ndateng'ura thahu ũcio*" (I take off from the fire that uncleanness). He repeated this act four times, each time passing the pot and its contents round the woman and girl before putting it back on the fire and taking it off again. Each time he altered the words of his formula slightly, specifying the form of uncleanness that she had been involved in (for example, letting her first menses be lost in the fields, letting them flow away in the stream in which she washed, or whatever fitted the case). After the fourth time he put the pot on the fire again with more water and left it there until it came to the boil.

Meanwhile, the girl and her mother retired for a while. When the pot was boiling they were summoned again, and again the medicineman took the pot off the fire four times, passed it round them, and put it back again, after which he took it off altogether.

Then a hole was dug near the entrance to the girl's mother's hut and it was lined with green banana leaves. Into this basin the contents of the pot were poured, and both the mother and girl washed in it.

Next the medicine-man poured a little of this water from the pot into the half-gourd that already contained the stomach juices, and added the magic powders *ũũmũ, mũcanjamũka, kĩnoria, njeehũ,* and *rũthuko*. He took two bunches of leaves (four twigs in each) of *mũkenia and mũgumo*. Then he made the woman and her daughter stand in front of the hut, and standing just behind them, he brushed them with the mixture twice from head to heel, and twice from heel to head. This he repeated in front of them. The medicine-man had now completed his part of the proceedings, and, having eaten his share of the meat, departed.

p.746

That night the girl's father had to take what was left of the mixture in the half-gourd and perform the "brushing" ceremony on his daughter and her mother, twice upwards and twice downwards from behind, and the same number of times from the front. This ceremony he performed in the hut with the two of them standing by the woman's bed Having completed this, the father went to his own hut for the night and he did not have ceremonial intercourse with the girl's mother again until

the fourth night, when he had intercourse with her twice This completed the purification of the girl.

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Introduction

The Kikuyu conception of marriage was so different from the European one that before we consider the details of the Kikuyu laws and customs relating to marriage and sex life it is essential to review briefly the general principles.

Among the Kikuyu there were many types of legal union between a man and a woman, but by no means did all of them rank as marriages. The position and status of the children resulting from such unions was always legalised, however, so there was therefore no such thing as an illegitimate child. Even a child born as a result of an illegal union was accorded a legal status and position which was fixed by long standing customs and depended upon the relevant circumstances.

Furthermore, it must be kept in mind that the children born from a perfectly legal relationship, (but not a marriage) were by no means always the legal children of their parents. They might rank as the legal children of some other man or even of some other woman, for Kikuyu custom provided, among other things, for the marriage of a woman to a woman. Such a female husband would arrange for her wife's children to be legally begotton on her behalf by a man who did not, however, become their legal father.

Another important aspect of marriage was that a married woman could, in circumstances which will be described in detail, have perfectly legal sexual intercourse with men other than her husband, but the children born of such unions were counted in law as the children of her legal husband. Or again, there could be perfectly legal unions between an unmarried woman and a man in certain clearly defined circumstances, and the offspring of such unions were ranked as the legal children neither of the man nor of the woman, but of her father, or, if he was dead, of her brother.

It was from the legal and not the physical father that all children took their clan names, and from this it follows that, although there were strict rules against incest, a man could and might easily marry a woman who was closely related to him by blood, but who was legally no relation at all. Both inside and outside the confines of marriage there were strict laws governing sexual relationships between men and women, but these laws had no bearing whatever upon the legal status (p.748) of the children, which was controlled by the marriage laws only and not the sex laws.

There were eleven principal forms of legal marriage which we must consider in detail, after which we must consider legal unions that did not constitute marriage, and other laws relating to sexual matters.

Normal Marriage of a First Wife

As soon as a young man had been initiated, passed through the novice stage, and had become a warrior, he was entitled to marry if he wished to do so, and if his father consented. In practice, only a very small percentage of warriors married within a year or two of initiation. The vast majority waited for at least five or six years, or even more. Those who married very quickly were men who were the only sons of elderly parents and who were therefore urged by their fathers to marry at once so that there should be a married man in the family to conduct affairs should the father die.

Proposals

In the course of normal life as a warrior, every man came to know a great many unmarried girls intimately through dancing with them and through having them as lovers in accordance with the custom of *nguĩko* (restricted intercourse). When, therefore, a young man decided that he wanted to marry, he usually had no difficulty in finding a girl whom he wished to take as a wife. Frequently, in fact, a man and a girl decided mutually that they wished to marry as a result of an intimacy achieved through *nguĩko*, but even if they came to a definite understanding, custom required that the proposal should be made in accordance with recognised tribal laws.

As soon as a man decided that he wished to marry, he had to go to his own sugar-cane garden and cut canes, and then get his mother and sisters (or those who ranked as such in the Kikuyu classification system) to help him prepare sugar-cane beer, which was brewed in his mother s hut. The father knew, of course, that beer was being brewed, and usually guessed what it was for, but he had to act as though he did not know·

In the early morning of the day after the beer was set to brew, he as head of the family—had to perform the usual ceremony of offering (p.749) beer to the ancestral spirits, but when he had done so, he called to his son and said to him, "My son, for whom have you brewed this beer? Who is coming to drink it?" To this the son answered, "I have brewed it for you, father," and the father replied, "Why is that? What do you want from me?" By recognised custom the son had to evade giving the true answer at this stage and simply say politely, "I am a grown man with sugar-cane gardens of my own, and it is good that I should brew beer for you sometimes". The father would then say, "Very well, my son, go and summon so-and-so and so-and-so (naming a number of senior friends and relatives among the local council elders), and tell them to come and drink this beer with me". Then, when the guests arrived, the father and his friends had a beer feast, and no further word passed between father and son that day. The father, however, knew by the answer given that his son intended to ask for his permission to marry.

On the following day, in the evening, the son went to his father in the men's hut, and told him that the reason he had brewed beer for him on the previous day was that he wanted to ask his father for advice. "I am a grown man now, and it is not good that I should live for ever without a homestead of my own. What do you advise me to do?" To this the father then replied, "If you wish to marry, go now and choose a wife from the homestead of so-and-so or so-and-so (naming three or four elders with whom he was on good terms and with whom he would favour a marriage alliance)".

Usually every father had heard from village gossip which girl his son was most friendly with, and if he approved of his son's choice he was careful to include that girl's father among the men that he named. If the father, on the other hand, had no idea whom his son wished to marry, he simply named three or four old men he was friendly with. If he did not mention the father of the girl whom the young man had chosen, the son at this stage was entitled to say, "At the homestead of so-and-so there is a girl who loves me". If the father had no objection to a marriage alliance with that particular family he then repeated his answer and included the name of the girl's father, thereby showing his consent. If, on the other hand, there was some family feud or curse which made a marriage into that particular family undesirable, the father answered, "If you wish to marry from that family, you must find the necessary marriage payment (*rũraacio*) yourself, for I and my family will not give you any help".

In the event of such opposition from his father, a young man could either abandon his project and seek a wife from among the families approved by his father, or he could organise a minor raid (*ita ya* [p.750] *guamba*) into Maasai country in the hope of acquiring enough stock by that means to marry without help from his father.

It sometimes happened that a young man, when he approached his father on the subject of marriage, did so without having any set views as to which girl he wanted to marry. In this case he then went off to make friends with the girls of the various families indicated by his father, and eventually proposed secretly to one of them, for every man had been taught again and again that before he made any formal proposal he must first get the private consent of the girl. This was very important in the case of a first wife, for the marriage of a first wife involved making the formal proposal in a carefully prescribed manner and a man would look very foolish if the girl turned him down when he made it.

The formal proposal was made as follows. The young man went to the home of the girl's father one evening, and entering the men's hut said to the girl's father, "*Baba ekwenda arute ndũgũ nawe*" (My father wants to make a friendly alliance with you). This was a set formula to which the answer always was, "*Mũkwenda nyũmba ĩrĩkũ?*" (Which of the woman's huts do you and your father like) To this the young man answered, "*Twendaga nyũmba ya . . .*" (We like the hut of . . .—naming the mother of the girl). This answer was followed by the question, "*Nĩmwarĩtie na mũirĩtu?*" (Have you and the girl spoken together about this), and the young man had to answer, "No," for custom demanded, and so did politeness, that he should not admit to having spoken to the girl before obtaining hei- father's consent.

The girl's father now, if he approved of the marriage, told the young man to go over to the girl's mother's hut, speak with the girl, and propose to her, explaining that he could not contemplate handing over his daughter in marriage without her consent. As the young man went out of the men's hut to the mother's hut, the girl's father sent a message to the girl's mother to come over to his hut, so that the young man might make his formal proposal without the mother being present. The girl and the young man then conversed, and he told the girl that her father wanted to know whether she was willing to marry him or not. The whole conversation was quite formal, and an onlooker would have had no hint from it that the man and girl had made their decision long before. The girl then said, "Go and tell my father that I consent". The young man went back to the men's hut and told the girl's father and mother this, after which he went back to his own home and reported the proceedings to his father.

His father then took charge and ordered sugar-cane to be cut and beer to be brewed. While it was brewing he sent a messenger to the (p.751) girl's father saying, "Come to my home tomorrow, I want to speak with you urgently". The girl's father recognised this formula as an invitation to a beer drink, and so, when he went next morning to the other homestead, he took with him one or two male relatives and some of his friends who were council elders.

When he arrived at the home of the father of the young man he said to his host, "Why have you brewed beer for me?" To this his host replied, "*Nĩ rũra ndakũgwata'"* (This is a token of friendship, literally, It is refreshment I offer you). No mention whatever was made of the proposed marriage on this occasion, for by long established custom the two families had to make friends formally before the question of a marriage alliance was discussed between the respective fathers.

After the lapse of a few days the young man's father again brewed beer and invited the girl's father. The invitation this time was, "To come and drink beer," and not merely, "I want to speak with you urgently". When he arrived at the home of the young man, the girl's father, who again had come with some relatives and friends, said as before, "Why have you brewed this beer for me?" This time the answer was, "*Nĩ tondũ ngwenda ndũgũ gwaku, na nĩngwenda ngũhe kĩhĩĩ gĩkĩ gĩakwa*" (It is because I want to make a friendly alliance with you, and because I want to give you this boy of mine). The girl's father then asked whether the young man had spoken to the girl (knowing full well that he had but pretending that he knew nothing), to which the young man's father replied, "*Nĩingĩkũrugĩra njohi ĩno mataiguanĩte?*") (Would I have brewed this beer for you unless they had already come to an agreement).

The whole party then proceeded to the business of beer drinking, and before he departed, the girl's father said to the young man's father, "Don't brew any more beer for me until I have asked the girl whether she wishes me to drink more of your beer". When the man got back to his own home he sent for the girl's mother and for one or two of her co-wives and he announced, "I have drunk beer today at **so**-and-so's, and I also drank there several days ago. Go now therefore and ask the girl whether she wishes me to continue to drink so-and-so's (the young man's father's) beer". The girl was thus given another opportunity to say definitely whether or not she accepted the young man, and if she did she sent a reply to her father in the following words, "*Nĩanyue, nĩndamũha*" (Let him drink, I give it to him). If, on the other hand, the girl had changed her mind and no longer wished to marry the young man, she had to reply, "*Nĩatige kũnyua rĩngĩ*" (Let him not drink again).

Once a girl had made this formal decision she was not supposed to (p.752) change her mind again, and she was considered to have bound herself to agree to the marriage. It was considered by the Kikuyu to be of the greatest importance that a man's first and chief wife should be in complete accord with him, and consequently she was given every opportunity of deciding for herself. This was in considerable contrast to marriage arrangements for wives other than the first and chief wife, where, as we shall see, girls were occasionally coerced into marriages that they did not really want.

After a lapse of a few days the father of the young man sent the latter with one or two companions to find out what the girl's answer had been. If the girl had given her formal consent, her father sent back the following message, "Go and tell your father to prepare the *njohi ya njũrio*" (beer for the proposal). This beer drinking was really a feast at which the betrothal of the girl to the young man was formally announced to the members of both families, and also to the public, since the matter could then become common knowledge. It might be compared to our custom of announcing an engagement in the press.

For the *njohi ya njũrio* the young man's family had to prepare not only a great quantity of beer, but also much bulrush millet gruel and a big supply of cooked *njahĩ* beans. When the preparations were complete a message was sent to the girl's family, and as many of the men as could get away from their normal duties came over to the home of the young man to share in this feast. Only a few women accompanied them, however, for a special betrothal feast for the women would follow later.

The girl's father, his brothers, male cousins, and also some of the council elders of his village who were not relatives, but who came to act as independent witnesses, went into the men's hut when they arrived at the young man's home. As soon as they arrived, the young man's father and one or two friends proceeded to pour off (*kerũra*) the beer in the hut where it had been brewed (that is, the hut of the young man's mother). However, they left one large *ndua* vessel untouched. Then they sent over to the men's hut and requested that the girl's father come with one or two of his relatives to have a look at the beer (*kũrora njohi*). They were first given hornfuls of beer drawn directly from the one *ndua* that had not been poured off. This was in order that they might satisfy themselves that it had been properly brewed (*marore kana nĩ hĩu wega*). It was, however, purely a matter of form, for the beer had already been tasted by the people who had poured it out. The girl's parents and their relatives announced that it was all right, (p.753) and it was then poured off, after which the mother of the young man gave them gruel and *njahĩ* beans to eat.

When they had eaten these, the girl's father asked leave to go and fetch a few more of his relatives from the men's hut where they were waiting. When they came over they were given one big *kĩnya* gourd of beer to drink among themselves, after which the girl's father said to the young man's father, "*Njohi ya ŋjũrio tũnyuaga inya inyanya*" (For the betrothal feast we are accustomed to drink eight gourdfuls of beer). These were then produced from where they had been placed after being poured off, and were formally presented to the girl's father, who handed back to his host three of the eight, saying, "This one is for your family, this one is for the *mũrora* (that is, for any council elders who have come as uninvited guests), and this one is for the women of your homestead".

The girl's father then sent out the five remaining gourds to the members of his own family and to his own friends who had come to the feast with him, but he himself, and two or three close relatives, did not go out into the courtyard to join in the general drinking, but instead remained in the hut, where they were given a special supply of beer for themselves.

The general beer drinking and feasting then proceeded in accordance with normal custom (see Chapter 8), and later in the day, when all the ordinary guests had departed, the young man's father handed the girl's father and his two or three companions a gourdful of beer called *njohi ya kũruta indo* (the beer to take things away—that is their staves etc. which they had laid aside as they entered the woman's hut, i.e. it was "one for the road"). Before the girl's father and his friends started drinking this, he stood up and in the presence of his own witnesses and some others whom the young man's father had called in, said, "We have drunk your beer today, and have thereby accepted your suit on behalf of your son; now therefore brew the *njohi ya· kũmenya mũciĩ* (beer to know our home), and bring it to our homestead in order that the women of our homestead may know that the girl is betrothed and that a marriage is to be negotiated".

A few days later the young man's father had this beer prepared and he and his son and a few other men, together with one or two of their womenfolk, took it over to the girl's home, where it was consumed by the women and men in a final feast to seal the betrothal. At the end of this feast, the

girl's father said to the young man's father, "*Rĩu thiĩ ũracie*" (Go now and prepare to make the marriage payments).

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The Marriage Payments

Before we consider the whole complicated procedure of *kũraacia* we must discuss the meaning of this word. It has become a common thing in Africa to hear Europeans—even those who have been in close contact with the Kikuyu, such as missionaries and Government officials—speak of the Kikuyu custom of *kũraacia* as though it consisted of "buying a wife", and in recent years, under the stress and influence of European contact, it has been partially true to say that the transaction constituted the purchase of a wife. Here, however, we are concerned with customs as they were before the coming of the Europeans, and it is perfectly clear that to the Kikuyu mind, the word *kũraacia* had nothing to do with buying and selling as such, but signified the making of certain payments for definite purposes other than the mere enrichment of the family of the girl who was to be married. The chief aim was to make the contract legally binding, the second to make the children of that marriage legal members of the family which paid the *rũraacio*, and the third to stabilise the marriage. It is best, I think, to translate *rũraacio* as a "marriage insurance", for, above all else, it acted as a guarantee of good faith on the part of the contracting parties.

Under the system whereby *rũraacio* was handed over, the parents and family of a girl would not accept *rũraacio* and allow a girl to marry a man unless they were reasonably sure that she would remain with her husband and be a good wife to him, for if a woman left her husband without just cause and without having been unfairly treated by him, her parents and family became liable to repay the whole of the *rũraacio* with interest.

On the other hand, if a man ill treated, or otherwise gave his wife just cause to leave him, he lost both his wife and the considerable number of stock that he had handed over as *rũraacio*. For this reason, a man's family would not allow him to make a marriage that was not likely to be a success if they could possibly help it. Moreover, if it became known to the members of a man's family that he was mistreating his wife, they at once remonstrated with him, and pointed out what he had to lose if his wife left him through his own fault, and they did everything in their power to make him behave better. Similarly, if a girl's father and mother heard that their daughter was acting in a way that was likely to wreck the marriage, they at once spoke to her and warned her of the consequences, pointing out how seriously it would affect the whole family.

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In only one respect may the *rũraacio* be thought of as a "purchase", and that is with regard to any children the woman might bear. The payment of the *rũraacio* did not give the person or people who paid it any absolute or exclusive right to the woman's person, but it did make any children that she might bear members of the family that had paid it; they had "purchased" her potential children.

As soon as a young man and his father had been told, "*Thiĩi mũraacie*" (Go and make the marriage payments), they went home and began the long series of complicated rites and ceremonies that together were described as *kũraacia*.

The Preliminary Religious Ceremony

The first of these ceremonies was a purely religious one, and consisted of making a sacrifice to God and to the ancestral spirits in order that they might give their blessing to the proceedings. The

young man's father ordered a small quantity of beer to be brewed on a given day, and in the afternoon of that day he took a small ram or a small he- goat (in either case it had to be an animal that had not yet functioned sexually), and slaughtered this in the courtyard in front of the hut of the mother of the young man who was going to be married. This sacrificial animal was called *mbũri ya kũgũra mbũri* (the goat to buy goats with). After it had been strangled, the father of the young man proceeded to pierce its chest in order to draw its blood. When he had done so, he allowed the first gush of blood to spill on the ground, calling out as he did so, "*Iyũkiani thakame inyuĩ mũrĩ thĩ*" (Receive the blood ye that are in the earth). He was referring to the ancestral spirits who were always spoken of as *arĩa me thĩ* (those who are in the ground). Then he took a small, new half-gourd and caught some of the blood that was gushing out of the wound, and when it was half full he put it aside and caught all the rest of the blood in a bigger half- gourd. Then, holding the small half-gourd with the blood in it in both hands, the young man's father prayed to God on behalf of his son. There was no set formula for the prayer, which the old man uttered in an extempore manner, but the sense of the prayer was always the same, and the following version gives an adequate idea of it.

> "*Ngai iyũkia; nĩwe waheire andũ, na nĩwe ũnginyĩtie nduĩke mũthuuri. Ndakũhoya mũka ũcio ndathiĩ kũgũra, toguo waheire, nĩ getha agakinya o haha. Agĩciare-ĩ, atũkie maitũ na atũkie baba. Na mbũri ici ciakwa ndũkareke igakuĩre kũu ngũraacia. Igatugie mũndũ ũcio kũu ngũraacia.*"

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> (God, accept this offering; it is Thou who gavest me a family, it is Thou who hast kept me until now that I am an old man. I pray to You for that wife for whom I am going to make marriage payments, even as Thou hast given me things in the past, in order that she may safely come here. Let her bear many children, that she may reproduce both my father and my mother (this was a reference to the fact that first-born children, male and female, were named after their paternal grandparents and that they were believed to be incarnations of them). Let these my goats and sheep not die when they reach the home where I am going with them to make the marriage payments, but let them be a support to that home).

This prayer was first addressed to God in Mount Kenya, the old man standing facing that mountain and holding out the half-gourd of blood at arms' length towards the mountain. Then, in turn, he addressed the same prayers to God in each of the other three sacred mountains, the Aberdare Range, Donyo Sabuk, and Ngong.

Having done so, he poured out the blood in the half-gourd—first, a little by his chief wife's hut, then near the entrance to the homestead, then on the right and left sides of the courtyard respectively, and finally in the centre of the courtyard. As he poured out the blood in each place he prayed to the ancestral spirits again:

> "*Aa baba, na inyuĩ aa maitũ, iyũkiai thakame, nĩ mbũri cianyu iria mwandigiire ndamũhoya rĩu. Mũnjatũrĩre njĩra, mũgakinyia ũhiũ ũcio ndatwara-ĩ, ũkagũre mũka ũrĩa ũciaraga agatua ithe, na atue nyina-ĩ*". (Oh, ye, my male ancestors, receive ye this blood! It is on behalf of the goats and sheep which you bequeathed to me that I now pray to you. Prepare the path for me, that these flocks may safely reach the place I am taking them to, and that they may bring us a wife who is very fruitful, in order that she may reproduce her father and her mother (this was a reference to the fact that the second-born son and daughter were named after their mother's parents))

After this offering of the blood of the sacrificial animal to God and to the ancestral spirits, the proceedings were halted until all the flocks of that homestead had been brought in for the night, and until every member of the family was present, for this was a family sacrifice which had to be attended by every member of the family, all of whom had been warned to be present at all costs. When the carcass of the animal was cut up, a small portion of each joint was cut off and laid aside in two small piles, the portions from the left-hand joints being put in one pile, those from the right-

hand joints in another. From such joints as had no pair, such as the *rũcuthĩ* (the sacrum with the lumbar and caudal (p.757) vertebrae attached), two pieces were cut and one piece put with each of the two piles.

The rest of the meat was then roasted and eaten by every member of the family, care being taken to put each bone back in a little pile by the fire. While this feast was being consumed, the two little piles of meat were left covered over with *mũthakwa* leaves. Then, late at night, after everyone had retired to sleep, the young man's father and his senior wife came out and laid them on either side of the stakes that had been used for the roasting platform, and jointly called upon the ancestral spirits to come and partake of their share of the family sacrifice. The pieces of meat from the right-hand joints were for the male ancestral spirits, and those from the left for the female ancestral spirits.

Early next morning, before any other members of the family were up, the young man's father took a hornful of beer, and out in the courtyard, held it towards each of the four sacred mountains in turn and offered it to God, praying in the same terms as on the previous day, but prefacing his prayers by saying, "*Iyũkia njohi ya gũikũrũkia nyama iria tũrakũheire hwaĩ*" (Accept this beer to wash down the meat that we sacrificed to You last night).

He then proceeded to each of the points where he had poured out blood on the previous evening, and at each he poured out a little of the beer, at the same time calling upon the male ancestors to accept this, and praying to them as before. He then took beer in a gourd drinking cup (the women's beer drinking vessel), and offered it to the female ancestors, at the same time praying to them for their blessing. This time he did not offer it to God first.

Later in the morning the remainder of the beer was drunk by all those members of the family who were of an age to drink beer, so that it was shared by all the members of the family, those living and those deceased. When the beer had all been consumed, the ashes of the sacrificial fire, the leaves on which the meat had been placed, the stakes, and the stomach contents of the sacrificial animal, were all swept up, carried out, and placed beyond the midden. Then the portions of *mĩratina* (*Kigelia* fruit) that had been used in fermenting this sacrificial beer were brought and squeezed dry, and the dregs of the beer were poured out over the place where the sacrificial fire had been as a further offering to the ancestral spirits, to complement the meat that had been left in two little piles overnight. This concluded the religious ceremony, which was the essential preliminary to all the other stages the business of making marriage payments (*rũraacio*).

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Njohi ya Gũthugumithĩria Mbũri (*The Beer to make the Goats and Sheep Urinate*)

The remainder of that day was spent by the members of the young man's family in preparing sugar-cane for beer which was called as above, "the beer to make the goats and sheep urinate". By nightfall this sugar-cane juice had been set to brew in the hut of the young man's mother, and then his father selected about 15 goats and sheep and told the young man and one or two of his companions to take them at once to the girl's home. They had to enter the courtyard of her parents' home and, without speaking a word to anyone, go straight across to the girl's mother's hut, open the door, and drive the goats and sheep in. They then had to depart, still without any word spoken to any members of the girl's family. The members of the girl's family recognised this procedure as opening the second stage of the marriage transactions as far as they were concerned, and they therefore knew that the *njohi ya gũthugumithĩria mbũri* would arrive the next morning.

Very early indeed on the following morning the father of the young man sent off two young women carrying one *nyanja* (large, wide-bottomed gourd) and one *gitete* bottle gourd of beer. The latter had to be a *gĩtete kĩa mũkwa*, that is, one that had a leather carrying strap sewn to it. These two gourds of beer had to arrive at the girl's home before any of the goats and sheep had been let out of the huts into the courtyard. On arrival, the beer was taken straight to the girl's mother's hut, where the 15 goats and sheep had been taken on the previous evening.

The beer in the *nyanja* was drunk at once, but only by people who were not likely to eat any sacrificial meat for some time to come. As soon as it had been consumed, the young women who brought the beer over were given back the *nyanja* and told to go back and say that the rest of the beer was to be brought over at once. As soon as they had departed, the girl's father and mother, and one other elderly man and his wife who had been summoned for the purpose, drank the beer that was brought in the *gĩtete* bottle gourd. This bottle gourd was hung up in the girl's mother's hut, where it remained until the marriage was consummated, as a sign that her daughter had been betrothed.

The Second Instalment of Goats and Sheep

As soon as the women who took over the early morning beer returned home, the young man and his father set out for the girl's home with (p.759) a further 14 or 15 goats and sheep. They had to take care that the total of those taken on the previous evening plus those taken now did not make up an exact multiple of 10, for that would be very unlucky. They were followed by a number of women carrying the rest of the beer that had been brewed.

When the men arrived at the girl's home with this second instalment of goats and sheep, they found the way into the courtyard barred by the women of the girl's home, who angrily demanded a *mwatĩ wa gũtiirũria riigĩ* (a virgin ewe for having opened the door). This referred to the fact that on the previous evening the young men had opened the girl's mother's door, a thing which in the ordinary course of events they had no right to do at all, and for which a fine of a ewe was payable.

The young man and his father had to acquiesce in this demand and hand over a ewe which they had brought for this very purpose, knowing that by custom the demand would certainly be made. The women having received the ewe, immediately ululated loudly, after which they opened the way into the courtyard so that the newly arrived second instalment of goats and sheep could join those brought on the previous evening, which were now in the courtyard.

The girl's father then demanded that a small boy from the young man's homestead should accompany these goats and sheep when they were taken out to graze so that he could keep an eye on them until such time as the new owners had come to know each goat and sheep individually, and so could look after them themselves. The young man's father always complied with this request if he could, for otherwise some of these animals might stray and get lost, and he would have to replace them with others.

By this time the rest of the beer had arrived, and the members of both families spent the rest of that day drinking beer and eating food provided by the girl's mother. The young man's parents and family then went home.

After an interval which varied from a few days to several weeks, the young man's father had a quantity of beer brewed, and he then sent over a message to the girl's home saying, "I am coming tomorrow with *njohi ya mĩtĩ* (beer for the sticks)".

The Ceremony of Kuuuna Mĩtĩ (*For Breaking up the Sticks*)

On the morning that had been fixed for this ceremony, the young man's father sent over six gourdfuls of the beer called *njohi ya mĩtĩ* (beer for the sticks), and he himself then proceeded to the girl's home, (p.760) accompanied by four council elders from the girl's village to act as independent witnesses to the ceremony of *kuuna mĩtĩ*.

The young man also collected a number of his friends of his own initiation age-group, and they, too, went to the girl's home to be present at this ceremony, and to consume the feast of bulrush millet gruel, which by custom the girl and her mother had to provide for the young man and his friends on this particular day.

Before the general beer drinking started, the young man's father, his witnesses, and the girl's father and his witnesses, all went into the girl's mother's hut and drank a little beer ceremonially. The girl's father formally asked the young man's father, "*Njohi ĩno ũtũreheire kĩ?*" (What have you brought us this beer for). The young man's father replied, "*Tũrehete mũtuunĩre mĩtĩ*" (We have brought it that you should break sticks for us). This was the customary way of saying that they had brought beer in order to be told exactly the number of animals they were expected to hand over. The girl's father then said that he was quite willing to do so, but first he had to know how many goats and sheep had already been brought over. The young man's father did not, in his reply, give the exact number, for the question was merely a formal one and both parties knew the exact number quite well, but he answered, "Two" if the number was 20 plus, or, "Three" if it was 30 plus.

At this stage in the proceedings the girl's mother set dishes of food before the young man's father and his witnesses, and while they were eating, the girl's father and his witnesses retired to the courtyard, where they proceeded to *una mĩtĩ* in the following way.

They sat round in a circle, and the girl's father took a number of round, sundried goat droppings (*mbimbi*), and he said, "So-and-so has already brought 29 sheep (or whatever the number was), and I am going to demand 50 (or 60 or 70, etc.) for the marriage payment". He then counted out one goat dropping to represent each complete ten and he handed them to one of his witnesses to hold. He then picked up some more droppings and said, "I shall also demand five *mbũri cia ũgendĩ*" (goats and sheep for the bride's father's brother). The number of these *mbũri cia ũgendi* varied according to the number required for the marriage payments, and there had to be one for each ten animals of the marriage payment. These goats and sheep were always given to a full brother of the girl's father, or, if he had no full brother, to a half-brother. They were always over and above the number of the marriage payment.

The girl's father handed the goat droppings that represented these *mbũri cia ũgendi* to another of his witnesses to hold, and he then took (p.761) some more droppings and counted out six to represent six, young, immature he-goats or *irũhi*. (The number of these goats did not vary with the number of animals for the marriage payment as did the *mbũri cia ũgendi*). Although a *kĩrũhĩ* was literally a young, male goat, the term was used in this context purely figuratively, and in fact, each of these six animals had to be a full grown he-goat, three of them castrated animals and three uncastrated. The six goat droppings representing these *irũhĩ* were given to another witness to hold. To these six he then added one more dropping to represent a goat which was called, curiously, *thenge ya mũũnyũ* (the he-goat for saline earth), *thenge ya ngo* (the he-goat for the shield), or *thenge ya gũita mĩaro* (the he-goat to make the bed ceremonially pure). The name used varied from one district to another, even from one family to the next, and other names were also in use. Next he took three or four goat droppings to represent wooden honey barrels (*ihembe cia ũũki*); one dropping to represent a sword, sword sheath, and sword belt (this sword, sword sheath, and

belt were in some districts replaced by a fat ram for the girl's mother); one dropping to represent a package of soda; and finally one to represent a package of tobacco (*rũtũndũ rũa mbakĩ*). All of these he handed to another witness.

In some families the girl's father also took five goat droppings to represent the five essential *ngoima* (stall-fattened animals) connected with marriage, and one to represent the *ngoima ya gũcina ndara* (the stall-fattened animal for burning the roasting sticks), but the more usual custom was not to count out droppings to represent these, for every man, even if he had never negotiated a marriage before, or taken part in such negotiations, knew that no marriage could be completed without these six special animals.

When this counting out of the droppings to represent all the various things had been completed, the girl's father and his witnesses (who were each in charge of certain goat droppings) went back into the hut and proceeded to hand them over to the young man's father, telling him what they represented. As he received each lot he passed them on to one or other of his own witnesses. It was then their turn to go out into the courtyard and hold private consultations, chiefly to deliberate as to how they could get the figure of the marriage payment reduced.

Then they went back to the hut again and entered into direct negotiations, and usually got the number of animals reduced, or at least some of them remitted until some indefinite future date. After an agreement had been reached between the men of the two parties, the girl's father called in her mother and his other wives and said, (p.762) "*Rĩu ĩtiani indo cianyu*" (Now demand your things). The girl's mother then announced that she would require one string bag, one axe, one big *kĩnya* gourd, and one leather carrying strap, all of which had to be new. When the women had enumerated their demands, the girl's father took the goat droppings that represented the goats and other things finally agreed upon, and holding them in both hands, spat a little beer over them to bless them. He then threw them into the part of the hut where the goats and sheep slept, at the end near the woman's bed.

The whole of the beer was then brought out, and of the six gourds of beer that had been sent over on this occasion, one would be given back to the young man's father for him to drink with his four witnesses two would be consumed by the male relatives of the girl (these were spoken of as *cia kuuna mĩtĩ nacio*—for breaking sticks), one was for the women, one for any council elders who might come as uninvited guests, and one for the relations-in-law of the girl's family. While the beer was being consumed, the young man's father sent his son home to bring some more beer that had been kept back and which was called "the beer for folding up the sticks" (*njohi ya gũkũnja mĩtĩ*). He also brought 10 more goats and sheep which he had left at home in readiness, knowing that as soon as an agreement had been reached he would have to bring 10 more animals to add to those already handed over. This third instalment had to be made on the day of the *kũnja mĩtĩ* ceremony. *Gũkũnja mĩtĩ* means literally, "to fold up the sticks", but was here used purely figuratively, for the place of sticks had been taken by the goat droppings, and far from being folded up and kept, they were thrown on the ground as we have seen above.

The handing over of the *njohi ya gũkũnja mĩtĩ* and 10 further goats and sheep ratified the agreement that had been made between the two parties, and was a proof that the young man and his father were in earnest.

That evening, after returning home, the young man's father also had to select and send over to the girl's home the first of the *ngoima* animals, called *ngoima ya kũgurarĩria mbũri* (a fat, stall-fed animal to set a seal on the payment of the goats and sheep). This animal would not, in fact, be

slaughtered for several days, but it had to be sent on the evening of the day on which the agreement had been made and ratified.

Among the various items—other than livestock—that had been enumerated in the agreement, there was always one that was spoken of as being *ya mũgambo wa tene* (of the voice of long ago). That is to say, it was a thing which, in that particular family, by ancient tradition, (p.763) had to be handed over before the *ngoima ya kũgurarĩria mbũri* could be slaughtered to set a seal on the payment.

The young man's father had been told which of the various items represented the *mũgambo wa tene*, and as soon as he had procured it and sent it over, arrangements were made for the slaughter of this *ngoima* (stall-fed) animal. Both parties were anxious that it should be slaughtered with as little delay as possible, for from the day when the formal betrothal was announced with the feast of *njohi ya njũrio* until the time when the animal was slaughtered, the fire in the girl's mother's hut was not allowed to go out, nor might either of the two mothers have her head shaved.

The Slaughter of the First Ngoima (*Ngoima ya Kũgurarĩria Mbũri—a Fat, Stall-fed Animal to set a Seal on the Payment of Goats and Sheep*)

After the *mũgambo wa tene* had been handed over, the girl's father fixed a day on which this *ngoima* to seal the contract of the goats and sheep was to be slaughtered, and on that day the young man came with one other young man of his own initiation age-group, and the animal was slaughtered behind the girl's mother's hut a little after midday. (In certain families this animal was slaughtered in the courtyard in front of the mother's hut instead). When this first *ngoima* had been killed and cut up, those joints which were normally roasted were put on the roasting platform, and when they were ready to eat the young man and his companion were given the one foreleg with the scapula attached (*guoko*), one half-saddle joint (*ikengeto*), and a piece of the posterior colon with supporting membranes (*gĩtũngo kĩa mara*). They were also offered the *riũa* (the layer of fat and tissue off the back of the sacrum and pelvis), but this they refused, saying, "Give it to the girl for her own use". They also cut off and handed back the scapula (*kĩande*) from the foreleg, to be sent to *mũka witũ* (our wife). The use of the words "our wife" instead of "my wife" in referring to the young man's betrothed is significant. As we shall see presently, in discussing the sex life of the Kikuyu, every member of a man's own initiation age-group was potentially allowed full sexual intercourse with all wives of other members of his own initiation age-group. Moreover, a man always addressed the wife of a man of his own initiation age- group as *mũka wakwa* (my wife) as a token of the fact that he was entitled to full sexual intercourse with her. When, therefore, the young bridegroom-to-be and his age-group companion sent the scapula to the bride-to-be and said it was for "their wife", they were formally (p.764) proclaiming the fact that as the former's wife, she would also be the potential wife of all members of his initiation age-group. When the young man and his companion had eaten their meat, they prepared to go home again, and they were told that in four days' time they had to bring eight big gourds of beer. This was usually called *njohi ya gũikũrũkia ndũrũme* (beer to wash down the ram), but it was also sometimes referred to as *njohi ya nyũmba* (beer for the family, *nyũmba* here being used in the sense of the whole body of a man's relatives, and not just a hut).

Every male and female relative of the girl's family who was of beer drinking age was expected to come and share in this beer, and the young man's father and a few of his special friends went to drink with them and were introduced to all the girl's relatives.

That same evening, one more gourd of beer had to be sent over by the young man's father as a special gift to the girl's father. This was called *kĩnya kĩa mathĩgĩ* (the gourd of the leafy twigs), a name whose significance could not be remembered by the elders I questioned.

Njohi ya Kaarĩki-inĩ (*The Beer at the Small Castor Oil Tree*)

When the *njohi ya gũikũrũkia ndũrũme* had been drunk, the girl's father told the young man's father that he next had to brew beer called *njohi ya kaarĩki-inĩ.* When he had brewed it he had to invite the whole of the girl's family to come and drink it at his home, so that the members of the girl's family might get to know the family which was about to be allied with them in marriage. The drinking of the *njohi ya kaarĩki-inĩ* was an age-old custom, neither the significance nor the name of which could be explained by my informants.

It is clear, however, that to the Kikuyu of the last century no marriage negotiations could proceed to the point of slaughtering the special animals that sealed the contract until this beer had been provided. As soon as this particular beer feast was over, the young man's father was expected to send over to the girl's home such of the agreed stock and other things as were still outstanding, other than those which by mutual consent had been remitted for the time being and which were to be paid in the future.

Njohi ya Atumia (*Beer for the Women*)

After the men of the girl's family had had the *njohi ya kaarĩki-inĩ,* her adult female relatives demanded a special brewing of beer for themselves (p.765) stating that the men had had two special brews of beer, *njohi ya njũrio* and *njohi ya kaarĩki-inĩ,* while they who had done all the work had not had any special brew for themselves. Accordingly, the young man's father had to order the brewing of enough beer for eight *kĩnya* gourds, and when it was ready the girl's adult female relatives met together at her home and this beer was taken over to them. Of these eight gourds, two went to the women, two to the relatives in general, one to the council elders, one to the girl's father and any special friends he wanted to share it with, one to the young man's father, who had provided the whole of it, while the eighth was called *njohi ya kuuna* (beer for dividing up), and was drunk ceremonially by all male and female members of the girl's family before they started the general drinking.

Njohi ya Kũraarĩria Ngoima (*Beer for appointing the Day for the Slaughter of the Stall-fed Beasts*)

Soon after the women's beer drink, a message was sent over to the girl's home asking that a day be fixed for the start of the slaughtering of the five principal *ngoima* which completed the marriage contract. The girl's father replied, "Brew beer on such-and-such a day and then bring it with the remaining four animals, and on that day I will call together all my family that they may inspect the marriage payment animals and the (*ngoima*). Then, if they are satisfied with them, we will proceed to the slaughtering of the *ngoima* and fix a day for the ceremonies to begin". This beer drink was called *njohi ya kũraarĩria ngoima*.

Before the beer drinking began, the members of the girl's family carefully inspected all the *rũraacio* (marriage payment) animals and all the stall-fattened beasts, and if they considered any of the latter to be unsatisfactory from the point of view of size, fatness, or anything else, they rejected them and demanded that they be replaced by others immediately. If this happened, it was customary for the girl's father to substitute one of his own fat rams for each rejected beast, and to arrange with the young man's father to compensate him with the difference in value later. When things had proceeded thus far, the beer was consumed and a day was fixed four or five days ahead

for the commencement of the ceremonies of slaughtering the special *ngoima* animals. During the intervening days all of the girl's relatives were busy preparing large quantities of gruel and other foods with which to entertain the young man's family at his home, while the (p.766) young man's family had prepared beer as their contribution to the marriage feast. Some of this they would send to the girl's home to be drunk by the men of her family when they were eating the meat of the *ngoima*, and the rest would be retained and given to the women of the girl's family when they came over in the evening.

The Slaughter of the Second Ngoima

The second of the stall-fattened animals to be slaughtered was that called *ndũrũme ya ndatho* (the ram for stabbing). The animal was killed by suffocation in the courtyard in front of the girl's mother's hut on the evening before the day fixed for the principal ceremonies to take place. The skinning and cutting up was done by the girl's father and one or two personal friends. No member of the young man's family was ever present on this occasion. When this had been done, the only joints that were roasted and eaten straight away were part of the liver, the *ngata* (the atlas with the throat meat attached), part of the stomach, the intestines, the kidneys, the *mũkua-tũhũ* (the last cervical and the first four thoracic vertebrae), and the *ngaĩ* (the *subcutaneous fascia*, or tough meaty tissue covering the animal just below the ribs). Both *makengeto* (half-saddle joints) were also roasted, but were not eaten immediately; they were put away to be eaten with the meat of another *ngoima* the next day. All the rest of the joints were taken into the girl's mother's hut and put on to boil. When they were cooked the women ate the *ngerima* (the fourth chamber of the stomach), and the rest were laid aside for the following day. Late in the evening, however, the girl's father came for a ceremonial taste of some of the boiled meat, *itikaraare itarĩngerie* (lest it should spend the night untasted).

The Slaughter of the Third Ngoima (*Ngoima ya Kĩrige—a Ngoima for Roasting*)

Early on the following morning, just as it was getting light, the young man's father sent over one *nyanja* gourd and one *gĩtete* bottle gourd with beer which was called *njohi ya kũrathima ngoima* (beer to bless the *ngoima*). The two women who brought this beer handed it over and returned home at once.

Meanwhile, the members of the girl's family and all her relatives started to arrive for the day's feasting. When they were all present, or at least all the more important members of the family, the beer was (p.767) brought out of the hut where it had been temporarily placed and the ceremony of *kũrathima ngoima* (to bless the *ngoima*) took place as follows.

The male members of the family group sat down in a circle all round the centre of the courtyard and the four senior members present were elected to perform the ceremony. Water was brought in a small half-gourd, and also two leafy branches, one of *mũthakwa* and one of *mũkenia*. *Ira* powder was also brought out by the girl's father and handed to the celebrants. (The girl's father himself had always to be one of the four chosen to perform the ceremony of blessing the *ngoima*). The four then each took *ira* powder on the ends of their right thumbs and went through a series of ceremonial motions. First, they each rubbed some *ira* on their palates, and, having done so, said, "*Twaathekia karakara karĩa kaanegenagia mwana*" (We make the palate which scolded the child smile). Second, they rubbed some *ira* on their tongues and said, "*Twatuhia rũrĩmĩ; nĩruo rũaragia*" (We make blunt the tongue; it is that which speaks). Third, they put *ira* on the pulse just above the collar-bone and said, "*Twakiria nduumĩro rũtuumaga twarakara*" (We quieten the pulse that throbs

when we are angry). Finally, they put *ira* on the navel saying, "*Twathekia rũrĩra; rĩu mwana nĩagĩtheke*" (We make the navel smile; let the girl therefore also smile).

When they had done this, the same four men took sips of water from the half-gourd, rinsed out their mouths, and washed away the *ira* powder, at the same time saying with each successive mouthful that they spat out, "*Twabucabucia marakara*" (We rinse out anger); "*Twabucabucia rũhuho rũa mũthuuri ũyũ na mũka; nĩmaanegenagia mwana*" (We rinse out the wind of the man and his wife who have in the past spoken angrily to the child); " *Twabucabucia mũirĩtu marakara make na ithe*" (We rinse out the anger that has occurred between the girl and her father); and, "*Twabucabucia mũiritũ marakara make na nyina*" (We rinse out the anger that has occurred between the girl and her mother).

When these four men had thus symbolically washed away all evil thoughts and words that in the past had marred the relationship between the girl and her parents, and which, if not so removed, might later cause her to be sterile, the girl's father took the *mũthakwa* and *mũkenia* branches and anointed them with *ira* powder. He then held both branches in his right hand and the other three men took hold of his wrists and arm, thus associating themselves with him. Together they uttered words of blessing which varied with different families but of which the following is an example: "*Twakenyũrĩra mbũri ĩno igongona ciothe irĩĩke*" (We break off little pieces [of *ira*] for this goat that all the sacrifices may be completed). Then they said, "*Mbũri ĩno ĩkarĩĩkie nyama ciothe, itigathũũke, na mwana nake akaagĩre*" (Let this [p.768] goat make all the meat complete, that it may not go bad, and let the child become good). This done, each of the four elders took a sip of beer and simultaneously spat it out on to the two branches, saying "*Mbũri ĩno ĩkarĩikie igongona ciothe*" (Let this goat complete all the sacrifices). Then they took another sip of beer and again spat it out over the branches, saying, "*Mwana witũ tondũ nĩtwamwendia, tũrĩ nyũmba nĩtwamũrathima!"* (Since we have caused our child to be loved i.e. we are making marriage arrangements for her) we, her relations, all give her our blessing).

The four elders then walked once round the he-goat that was to be slaughtered, after which each in turn took the *mũthakwa* and *mũkenia* branches that they had just blessed as above, and struck the goat with them on the face and on the tail. This goat was handed over to some of the warriors of the girl's family with instructions to take it behind the girl's mother's hut and slaughter it there. It was then called *ngoima ya kĩrige* (a *ngoima* for roasting). Behind the hut they were joined by two or three young warriors, relatives of the young man, who were present as witnesses. If anything went wrong in the ceremony of skinning and cutting up the goat, they had at once to provide another goat from the young man's father's home in its place. In particular it was essential that the eyes be taken out intact, a job which was allocated to the relatives of the young man.

The Slaughter of the Fourth Ngoima

Once the cutting up of the *ngoima ya kĩrige* had started, most of the male relatives of the girl sat round to watch this procedure behind the mother's hut. Then the girl's father brought out the next *ngoima*, which was called *ngoima ya kĩhunyũro* (a stall-fed beast for a hard or dry skin). This was a big fat ram and it had to be slaughtered in front of the mother's hut. The slaughtering was done by two elders and two warriors related to the girl. When the skinning process had started, the girl and one or two of her companions who had been waiting for the moment rushed out of her mother's hut (whence they had been watching), and seized the skinning knives, saying that they would not allow the skinning to proceed unless they were given a present. The young men refused at first, whereupon the girls retreated with the knives to the mother's hut. As this was all a part of

recognised custom, the girl's father had also been preparing for this moment, and he now brought his daughter a live female goat or ewe and handed it to her. This was called *mbũri ya kahiũ* (the sheep or goat for the knife). If the (p.769) girl did not like the animal offered by her father she had the right to refuse it and demand to choose one for herself from his flock. As soon as she was satisfied, she handed back the skinning knives and allowed the work to proceed. This *mbũri ya kahiũ* was regarded as compensation to the girl for any angry words and harsh treatment she might have received from her father in the past.

The girl, having received the goat or ewe, handed it over at once to her future husband, who had come over in readiness to receive it, and who up till now, had been keeping in the background. It was taken at once to his own home, and when the marriage actually took place and he had built a new hut for his bride, this goat or ewe had to be the first animal to enter her new hut, for although she had handed it to her future husband to look after, it was hers and not his.

The skinning and cutting up of the *ngoimaya kĩhunyũro* then proceeded under the direction of two elders. The sacrum with the lumbar and caudal vertebrae attached (*rũcuthĩ*), one pelvic bone with part of the leg meat attached (*rũhonge*), and some of the intestines were set aside to be sent later to the man at whose homestead the girl had been initiated. The remainder of the carcass was jointed, but the meat was put to one side to be divided up in the manner to be described presently.

The Slaughter of the Fifth Ngoima

At this stage in the proceedings, all the women belonging to the girl's home, and all her female relatives who had come for the occasion and who had been waiting in the various huts of the homestead, came out into the courtyard and started dancing the women's dance called *gĩtiiro*. At the same time they sang a song, the words of which were as follows:

Tũkwenda tũneo ngoima iitũ.	We want to be given our stall-fed beast.
Tũkwenda ndũrũme ya kũruria mwengũ	We want our fat ram to provide fat to soften our pubic aprons
Naya kũruria kanũgũ,	And our genitalia,
Kũrĩa twaĩhĩirio nĩ maĩ	Where they were spoilt by water
Tũgĩthambia mũirĩtu ũyũ	When we washed this girl
Akĩrua.	When she was initiated.

After they had danced and sung these words for some time, the girl's father brought out the fifth *ngoima*, a fat ram that was called *ngoima ya atumia* (the stall-fattened beast for the women), and the women at (p.770) once seized it by its legs, head, and neck. Holding it high in the air over their heads, they danced the *gĩtiiro* dance with more and more fervour until they finally hurled the ram to the ground and called upon the young men to come and slaughter it and cut it up for them.

While this was being done, all the women went on dancing the *gĩtiiro*, and each in turn danced up to the young men in a *pas seul* and said, "*Nĩ'heo kĩgutho gĩa kũruria mwehio*" (Give me a piece [of fat] to soften my pubic apron with—*mwehio* was another word for *mwengũ*). The skinners then cut off a lump and gave it to her, and she danced away and another danced up in her place. The pieces of fat so received by each woman were later all pooled, rendered down together, and then re-divided among them to be used to rub into their leather pubic aprons and skirts and to anoint their bodies and especially their genitalia.

The Dividing Up and Eating of the Meat

Counting the ram slaughtered on the previous evening, whose meat had been kept until this day, there were now altogether three rams and one he-goat to be eaten on this occasion. Of these, the meat of the three rams was divided up as follows.

The three breasts, both the outer fatty covering and the breast proper, were now given to the three senior brothers of the young girl's father (her paternal uncles), and the three tongues were given to the next three senior male members of her family. One foreleg and one half-saddle joint from each ram were given to the girl's father for him to apportion as follows: one of each to the girl who was going to be married (for herself and her friends), one of each to any daughter of his who had been married previously and who was living with her husband in the neighbourhood, and one of each to the women of his own family.

The remainder of the meat of the three rams was divided up among the assembled relatives of the girl according to custom, each person receiving meat from those joints which were appropriate to his or her age and sex. The cheeks, ears, and kidneys of each ram were, however, put aside and given to the girl who was to be married as an additional portion for herself and her special friends.

The breast and the tongue of the he-goat were brought from the place where the goat was being cut up and they were given to the girl s senior paternal uncle. The sacrum with the lumbar and caudal vertebrae attached (*rũcuthĩ*), the fourth chamber of the stomach (*ngerima*) (p.771) and one pelvic bone with part of the leg meat attached (*rũhonge*) were put in the girl's mother's hut, where she and her husband would eat them when all the guests had departed. The remainder of the meat of the goat, the *thenge ya kĩrige*, with the exception of a small piece from the breast (*nguro*) which was required for a special ceremony as described below, was eaten by the elders and warriors of the girl's family.

As soon as the women and girls had received their meat, they ate it quickly and set off for the young man's home, taking with them the gruel and other cooked vegetable foods which they had prepared for this purpose, and which had to include bulrush millet gruel, *njahĩ* beans, pigeon peas, edible arums, and ripe bananas. However, before we turn to the procedure at the young man's home, we must examine the nature of the proceedings connected with the *ngoima ya kĩrige* (the stall-fed beast for roasting).

When this he-goat was slaughtered, a small piece of meat was taken from the breast, cut in half, and put to one side. This was called *nguro* (or *nyama ya gũkura*—meat for a ritual ceremony). When the assembled male members of the girl's family had roasted and eaten all the rest of the meat, they went back to the courtyard to prepare for their beer drinking, and left only two of the girl's paternal uncles and two young men of the young man's family, one of whom had to be a brother, half-brother, or cousin on the father's side. This group performed to the ceremony of *gũkura*, as follows. The two paternal uncles of the girl sat down on one side of the fire where the goat meat had been roasted, and the two young men sat down on the other side facing them. Then the bottle gourd that had been brought over with beer in the morning and which had been used for the ceremony of blessing the *ngoima* was brought to them by one of the women of the homestead. It had been refilled from another supply of beer that had been sent over from the young man's home in a large brewing vessel *indua*). The senior of the two uncles and the senior of the two young men each swallowed one mouthful of this, laid the gourd aside and performed the *kura* ceremony. The senior of the two young men took the two pieces of breast meat in his hands, and the other young man held his arm so as to be associated with him. Then the elder young man leaned across to the senior uncle of the girl and said, "*Wanyu wakinĩ*" (a greeting implying they were now of one family), to which the uncle replied, "*Wanyu wakinĩ*". The young man said, "*Wanyua mong'o*" (a greeting between two men who have drunk from the same horn), and the uncle answered, "*Wanyua mong'o*". The senior uncle then took two bites from the meat which was still held by the young man, and having swallowed these bits of meat, he took the joints from the young

men, and holding them in his (p.772) hands, and with the other uncle holding his arm, the same formula and greetings were repeated. The senior of the young men then took two bites of the meat at the end of the greetings.

The same procedure was then continued. First the junior uncle held the meat, and, with his arm held by the senior uncle, he offered it to the junior of the two young men. After this the junior of the two young men repeated the whole performance, so that each of the f_{0Ur} had in turn been the principal person in these greeting ceremonies.

The remaining parts of the joints were then cut in two, and each of the four ate one portion. Then the.senior uncle of the girl took the *gĩtete* bottle gourd of beer in his hands, and the other uncle held his arm. They held the beer towards the senior of the two young men and the same greetings as before were exchanged. After this the young man took two mouthfuls from the mouth of the gourd, which was held for him by the girl's uncle. The whole ceremony then proceeded in the same way as for the piece of breast meat, until each of them had ceremonially drunk some of the beer in this way. The two uncles then went into the courtyard, leaving the two young men to finish the beer and go home.

This ceremony of *gũkura* was very important; it corresponded to putting signatures to a marriage certificate and so sealing the compact on behalf of the two families. Consequently, these four men became the chief witnesses in any subsequent dispute that arose over the marriage. No Kikuyu marriage of the type we are considering at the moment was legal and binding until this ceremony had taken place, that is to say, the handing over of goats and sheep was insufficient to make a marriage legal unless followed by the ceremonial act of *gũkura*. Moreover, as we shall see presently, a second act of *gũkura* had to take place later at the young man's village to confirm and ratify the first agreement.

When this ceremony of *gũkura* was over, the two uncles joined the girl's other male relatives in the courtyard, where they drank the beer provided by the young man's family. The women, meanwhile, had all departed to the young man's home as we have already seen.

That evening, after most of the male relatives of the young man had finished their beer and gone home, four senior male relatives remained behind. They went round to the place where the *thenge ya kĩrige* had been slaughtered and where the ceremony of *gũkura* had taken place, and there performed the following ceremony, which was to safeguard the girl from witchcraft (*ũrogi*).

They took one of the bits of wood used for the roasting platforms, broke it in two, and put it with the wooden skewers that had been used to roast the meat. Then they brought the dregs of beer from one of the beer gourds and poured this out at the places where the (p.773) goat's head, tail, and body had lain when it was cut up. Without this simple ceremony, anyone who wished the bride ill could take a bone or other relic of the beast and use it to make witchcraft against her, but once this ceremony had been completed, if anyone tried to do such a thing, his witchcraft would work against himself instead, and it was believed that he would certainly die within one month.

The Ceremonies at the Young Man's Home

On the day that the *ngoima* were slaughtered at the girl's home, the following ceremonies took place at the home of the young man.

After the slaughtering of the *ngoima* had started at the girl's home, her father sent off a messenger with a fat ram for the young man's family. This was called *mbũriya moko*, and it was sent to take the place of the one foreleg and one half-saddle joint of each of the beasts which in theory should

have been sent back to the young man's family as their share of the meat. This animal was slaughtered at once and divided up without ceremony among the members of the young man's family. It was "just for meat" and had no ceremonial significance.

While the men were dealing with this *mbũri ya moko*, all the women and girls of the family were completing their preparations for the arrival of the women and girls of the bride-to-be's family. A small fresh brew of beer was made ready for the following morning, and the beer that was to be provided for the visiting women was inspected to make sure that there was enough. An unfermented honey drink (*mũruru*) was prepared for the girls who might not drink beer, and four extra gourds of this were also prepared to exchange for four of the same size gourds of *kĩmere* gruel when the women and girls of the bride- to-be's family arrived. Until this exchange had taken place, the latter group would not enter the courtyard.

In the early afternoon, a little before the visitors arrived, the young man's father sent over two more gourds of beer to the girl's home. This was called *njohi ya mathĩgĩ* (the beer of the leafy branches), and it was this beer which was to be consumed by the male members of the girl's family after they had eaten their meat from the *ngoima*.

When the girl's female relatives arrived at the young man's home, the formal exchange of the unfermented honey drink for *kĩmere* gruel took place, and then they all went into the courtyard and proceeded to dance the *gĩtiiro* dance. On this occasion the songs that accompanied the dance were all simply praises of the girl who was going to be married.

After they had danced for a while, they were presented with the (p.774) beer and other things that had been prepared for them, and they in turn handed over the food that they had brought. The senior women among the visitors then apportioned the beer, and they had at once to send one gourdful to the girl's father. By this time it was getting dark, so the woman who had carried it was given two warriors from the young man's home village to escort her. The general feasting then started and continued all night. The senior women who had had children initiated (such a woman was called *nyakinyua*—one who is allowed to drink beer in public) went to one hut, the younger married women who had not had children initiated (called *kang'ei*) went to another, and the girls to a third. Since there were not enough stools to go round, all the guests were provided with ox hides to sit on, because on no account might they sit directly on the floor.

At intervals throughout the night they all went out into the courtyard to dance the *gĩtiiro* dance and sing songs which became louder, lewder, and cruder as the night wore on and spirits rose. When dawn came at last they were given more beer, which was called *njohi ya kũruta indo* (beer for taking out one's belongings, or "one for the road"), and having drunk this, they started off to their own homes.

Njohi yα Mũruithia (*Beer for the Initiation Host*)

After the ceremony of slaughtering the *ngoima* was over, the young man's father was told to prepare beer for the man at whose homestead the bride-to-be had been initiated. This was called *njohi ya mũruithia*, and it was usually combined with *njohi ya mũtiiri* (beer for the woman who had acted as chief sponsor or supporter to the girl on this same occasion). Eight *kĩnya* gourds of beer had to be prepared and sent over to the girl's home. The initiation host (*mũruithia*) and the sponsor were then summoned to the girl's home for this beer drink. Of the eight gourdfuls, each of the principal guests for whom the beer had been brewed received two gourds, which they shared with their friends. One was given back to the young man's father, one was given to the male

members of the girl's family, one to the female members, and one served as *mũrora* for casual guests of council elder status.

Njohi ya Gũikũrũkia Nyama (*Beer to Wash Down the Meat*)

As soon as the above mentioned beer feast, held in honour of the initiation host and sponsors was over, a day was fixed for the beer feast (p.775) called *njohi ya gũikũrũkia nyama*. This beer was prepared by the young man's family. On this occasion all the women relatives of the bridegroom returned the visit of the girl's relatives and feasted and danced at the girl's home. The girl's relatives provided a quantity of food for the feast, but all the beer and a proportion of the food was brought over by the young man's family.

On the morning of the day fixed for this feast, all the female relatives of the young man assembled at his home in order to provide an escort for the women who would actually do the carrying, and in order to take part in dancing the *gĩtiiro*. The things to be carried consisted of the following: ten *kĩnya* gourds and one *mũcema* gourd of beer, two gourdfuls of gruel, at least four bunches of bananas, four gourdfuls of unfermented honey drink, and four bags full of yams. These things were carried by selected young married women, who handed over their small babies to some of the older women to look after for the time being.

The women and girls who had not been detailed to carry these things, but who formed the escort, dressed themselves in a variety of impromptu fancy costumes. Some obtained spears, bows, arrows, shields, and warriors' head-dresses, and thus dressed up as young warriors. This was to symbolize the fact that the bridegroom-to-be was a warrior, and that the stock that had been handed over as marriage payments was obtained by his own and his ancestors' prowess in war. Some of the other women carried little bunches of sweet potato vine to represent all the fodder that the stock had consumed and the labour that this had entailed. Others carried bits of thorny wood to represent the *magiri*, which were the strong boughs used in building stockades for cattle enclosures. When everyone was ready, the beer and other things were picked up and the party moved off, all the escort singing *gĩtiiro* songs, and stopping to dance at intervals as they went.

The male members of the young man's family set out at the same time, but they went very slowly, so as to let the women arrive first and give them time to carry out their mock raid in accordance with custom.

Meanwhile, at the young girl's home, preparations had been underlay since early morning. Every available female relative had assembled there, each bringing some contribution to the day's feast, and when they had piled these food supplies in readiness in the huts, they set to work to prepare for the arrival of their guests.

They too, dressed themselves in impromptu fancy dress. Some rubbed earth and dust all over their bodies and faces to symbolize the toil and hard work they had done in the course of rearing the bride-to-be to her state of readiness for marriage. Others carried small (p.776) bundles of wild spinach to symbolize the trouble they had had in finding enough food for the girl in seasons of food shortage. Still others rubbed themselves over with dry red ochre to show how they had stinted themselves of oil and fat in order to nurture the girl.

The only other preparations consisted of selecting five men of the regiment age-group directly junior to that of the girl's father and placing them by the entrance to the village. Their task would be to seize the *mũcema* gourd of beer from the visitors, a ceremonial act, the significance of which has been forgotten.

When the women and their escort got near to the girl's home they stopped and danced the *gĩtiiro* dance, while one of their number, who was not in fancy dress, and who had been chosen for the purpose, was sent off to carry out the "raid". This woman was spoken of as *ngerewani*, a military term used for the body of warriors who actually made a raid. Her duty was to creep up the girl's home, seize some unsuspecting girl child there, and carry her off. Failing that, she had to seize the girl child's pubic apron and take that back in triumph. This symbolized *gũtaha mũirĩtu* (to capture the bride by raiding), and it was probably a relic of the time when "marriage by capture" was the rule.

The women of the girl's home knew that this "raid" would be made and they did their best to prevent it. At the same time they sent off a *ngerewani* of their own to try to get hold of a boy child from the young man's family, or better still, one of the spears or emblems of manhood which the escort of the beer party were carrying. After a time each side managed to secure the trophy it desired, the one symbolizing the capture of the bride and the other the enslaving of the bridegroom to the girl's family. Then the women of the young man's family came right up to the entrance of the girl's home, so that the two parties of women were face to face.

Here they took turns dancing the *gĩtiiro* dance and singing *gĩtiiro* songs, each party taking care to sing the praises of their own family and to belittle the achievements, and deny the claims, of the other. They also sang many obscene and lewd songs, and made many obscene gestures which had reference to the sexual life which the young man and the young girl would soon enter upon. They also demanded presents of each other, while individuals from either side danced *pas seuls* and acted out in pantomime, various incidents in the lives of the girl and young man.

After this had been going on for some time, the men of both parties, who were by now all assembled in the courtyard, became impatient and called out demanding that the beer be brought to them so that they could start apportioning it. The women carrying the ten *kĩnya* (p.777) gourds and the *mũcema* gourd, therefore left the others and entered the courtyard. As they did so, the *athuuri a mũcema* (*mũcema* elders) seized the *mũcema* of beer from the woman who was carrying it, sat with it by one of the granaries, and started drinking. The other ten women took in their beer, and having handed it over, rejoined their companions for further dancing. After a time they stopped dancing and the women of both sides entered the courtyard together and danced together instead of separately to show that now they were no longer of different families, but all one family.

Meanwhile, the bridegroom-to-be and his warrior friends entered the various women's huts and demanded all kinds of food. By custom they had to be given any food that they asked for, so the women of the girl's family had to have samples of every principal Kikuyu dish available on this day. The beer was then divided out among all the guests in accordance with ordinary beer drinking custom, and the girl's father supplemented that brought over from the young man's home with more that he had had brewed for the purpose.

The rest of the day was spent in beer drinking and feasting, and at intervals the women all danced the *gĩtiiro* dance together and ululated loudly. The bride-to-be remained inside her mother's hut, watching the proceedings from the door, but when the guests had all departed she and her own special girl friends came out and danced a little by themselves.

Thenge ya Ngurario (*The He-goat for Spilling Blood*)

At some point after the slaughter of the *ngoima*, and either before or after the *njohi ya gũikũrũkia* (beer for washing it down), and its attendant ceremonies, the girl's father had to send over to the

young man's father the *thenge ya ngurario*. Although called "the he-goat for spilling blood", this present had in fact to consist of either two he-goats or one bullock. When the feast of the *njohi ya gũikũrũkia nyama* was over, the young man's father fixed a day for the slaughter of this bullock or the first of the two he-goats.

On the day appointed for this, all the male relatives of the young man assembled at his home to eat the meat, and the girl's father sent over two members of his family to act as witnesses at the slaughter and to perform the ceremony of *gũkura* at the end of the feast. These two men might not be the paternal uncles who had performed the ceremony of *gũkura* when the *thenge ya kĩrige* was slaughtered, but if possible had to be other paternal uncles of the girl, or, failing that, other male (p.778) relatives. They performed a ceremony of *gũkura* identical to that already described, though the two representatives of the young man's family also had to be different from those who had taken part in the previous *gũkura* ceremony.

On this occasion, it was the representatives of the girl's family who started the ceremony by offering meat to the young man's representatives, and the latter were the first to offer the beer.

If two goats had been sent in place of one ox, the second of them was not slaughtered on the same day, but rather after an interval of two or three days. For the slaughter of the second he-goat no representatives of the girl's family needed to be present, and the meat was eaten without any ceremony.

After the second goat had been eaten (or in the case of an ox, after the meat had been consumed), the girl's father had to send over a fat ram, *ndũrũme ya kũhoria thenge* (a ram for cooling down the he-goat). This was also slaughtered and eaten by the young man's family without any special ceremony. It had to be followed by a present of four gourds of beer from the girl's family to the young man's in order to "wash down the meat" that they had eaten.

The Handing Over of the Mbũri cia Ũgendi (*Goats for the Girl's Father's Brother*)

At this stage in the proceedings, the girl's senior uncle sent a message to her father that he wanted his *mbũri cia ũgendi* (one animal for each complete ten of the marriage payment). The uncle fixed a day upon which they were to be brought to him, saying he would have beer in readiness on that day.

The girl's father then communicated with the young man's father saying, "We are to take the *mbũri cia ũgendi* on such-and-such a day". Having received this message, the latter had beer prepared for that day, and in the morning he sent it over by special messenger to the girl's uncle's home, while he himself, with the son who was to be married, went to the girl's father to help him drive over the *mbũri cia ũgendi*.

At the beer feast which followed the handing over of these animals, the young man's father was given five gourds of beer for himself and his friends, the remainder being divided up in accordance with normal custom (see Chapter 8).

p.779
Mbũri ya Gũcina Ndara (*A Ram for burning the Roasting Platform*)

After the *mbũri cia ũgendi* had been thus handed over, all the preliminary negotiations were complete and the young man might arrange to take his betrothed to his own home as soon as he liked. Often a man was not in a hurry, for his life as a warrior kept him very busy. My informants said that often two whole planting seasons elapsed between the completion of the preliminary

ceremonies and the actual wedding. Whatever the interval was—whether a few days or a year or more— the bride-to-be could not be taken by her prospective husband to his own home, that is, he could not *hikia* her (literally, cause her to follow him), until he had handed over the *ndũrũme ya gũcina ndara* (ram for burning the roasting platform), followed by the *njohi ya kũhoya mũrĩmi* (beer to ask for the cultivator).

If the interval was a short one, the ram that was brought over to the girl's family was roasted with firewood composed of the wood of the roasting platform which had been used in the ceremonial *ngoima* feast. After that feast, the wood from the roasting platform had been placed under one of the granaries in the girl's home and kept for this purpose. If, on the other hand, the interval was a long one, the wood pieces were carefully burnt by the girl's mother in the middle of the courtyard. Then, when the *ndũrũme ya gũcina ndara* was slaughtered, it was roasted with other wood specially cut for the purpose. However, as the name implies, the ram was really killed in order to burn the roasting platform of the ceremonial *ngoima* feast, and so remove the last traces of that feast.

On the day following the eating of the *ndũrũme ya gũcina ndara*, the bridegroom-to-be collected one or two of his female friends and together they went over to the bride-to-be's home with three gourdfuls of beer. They handed these over, saying that it was *njohi ya kũhoya mũrĩmi* (beer to ask for the cultivator, that is, the bride). They then asked for gruel for themselves, and waited about until the girl's father and the older men and women present were drunk. Then they found the bride-to-be and carried her off with them to the young man's home.

The girl, of course, went quite willingly, although she had to act as though she was unwilling to go, and the custom is almost certainly yet another relic of the days of marriage by capture. This view is confirmed by the fact that as soon as the young men and girls of the bride-to-be's home discovered that she had been carried off, they had the right to rush as quickly as possible to the young man's home. If they could manage to lay hold of two or three goats and sheep there, (p.780) they had the absolute right to keep them. This was called *gũtharĩkĩra mũciĩ* (to raid the homestead). The idea was that as their young woman had been raided they were entitled to make a retaliatory raid. Ordinarily the people at the young man's home kept a sharp look out to prevent this raid, but if they stopped the raiders from taking the animals they had, by custom, to compensate them by making them a gift of one animal, which was called *mbũri ya mũtharĩko* (the sheep of the raid)

If the young man and his women friends failed to carry off the bride on the evening that they took the *njohi ya kũhoya mũrĩmi*, they had to carry her off the next day when she was working in the fields. In either case the whole ceremony was conducted in a friendly spirit and usually by prior arrangement with the girl herself, but at the same time the girl was bound by custom to make a great show of unwillingness to go with her bridegroom. She had first to struggle with her "captors" and then submit and go with them weeping, or at least pretending to do so.

From this point on, the ceremonies connected with the marriage of a first wife differed from one district to the next in South Kikuyu. Therefore, the most generally accepted rites and ceremonies will be described first, followed by a brief account of the more important variations.

The Ceremonies preceding the Consummation of the Marriage

Kĩrĩro (*Days of Mourning*)

As soon as the party that "carried off the bride" brought her to the young man's home, they took her into the bridegroom's mother's hut. Soon afterwards some of her girl friends came over and

joined her, and for four nights and three days they stayed with her. These days were called *kĩrĩro* (days of mourning, during which the bride performed ceremonial mourning because she had been carried off from her own home). Throughout this period she might not eat any food other than that cooked by her own mother and sent over specially for her, nor might she be alone, day or night, but had to be guarded all the time by her girl friends. They even had to escort her into the bush if she wished to relieve herself.

On the morning of the fourth day, after four nights and three days had been spent thus in seclusion, this period of mourning came to an end and the bride's girl friends returned to their own homes.

p.781
Building the Bride's Hut

While the period of ceremonial mourning was in process, the bridegroom and his friends and relatives collected and prepared all the materials with which to build a hut for the bride. On the fourth day, when the bride's friends had gone home, the hut was erected, but not furnished. However, a fire was lit in it that evening with embers taken from a fire in the field (or in the case of members of the Ũkabi initiation guild, fire made with fire sticks), and a few children were sent to spend this, the fifth night, in the new hut, so that it would not become unlucky because no one had slept in it on the day that it was built. That night the bride again slept in her mother-in-law's hut, and again her husband was kept away from her, for this night was the fifth, and five being an uneven number, ceremonial sexual intercourse might not take place.

Furnishing the Bride's Hut

On the fifth day all the women of the bridegroom's home spent the day getting the hut ready for the couple to occupy that night. Some of the women brought stones to make the hearth. Others cut firewood and stacked it on the platform over the hearth. Still others brought two new cooking pots and two new stools which they anointed with red ochre, while the bridegroom's father provided a new oxhide sleeping mat. The setting up of the stones for the new hearth was done by the mother-in-law herself.

Another group of women spent the day preparing some bulrush millet gruel and cooking *njahĩ* beans. Finally, towards evening, the women all helped to build up the woman's bed, upon which the bride and bridegroom would sleep and consummate the marriage.

Consummating the Marriage

In the evening of this, the fifth day, after the furnishing of her new hut had been completed, some of the younger women of the bridegroom's family fetched the bride from her mother-in-law's hut and escorted her to her own new hut behind that of her mother-in-law. She pretended to be very unwilling and had to be pushed and dragged (p.782) along until at last she entered the door and was taken to the entrance of the bed (*ũrĩrĩ*). Here she was joined by her mother-in-law, who brought castor oil and red ochre. She mixed these and anointed the bride all over, also anointing her skin cloak and skirt. The bride was then told to hang her cloak up on the peg by the entrance to her bed and climb into it.

The bridegroom came in, bringing with him the goat that was called *mbũri ya kahiũ*, which had been given to the bride on the day of the *ngoima* feast, and he put it into the *kwerũ* (goats' and sheep's part of the hut). His mother then brought him the ceremonial bow and arrow that had been given to him in connection with his initiation, and which until now had been in her hut. He received them at his doorway and hung them up in his own hut. Then his mother took him aside and

reminded him that on the night when the marriage was to be consummated, the sexual intercourse which he had with his bride was "ceremonial sexual intercourse", in fact, it was a sacrifice (*igongona*). He therefore had to have full sexual intercourse with her twice, neither more nor less.

Having reminded her son of these things, his mother brought two half-gourds of cooked *njahĩ* beans and two small gourds of gruel into his hut. She gave one of each to her son and the others to the bride, who was sitting on her bed. When each had eaten, the man's mother put the dishes in the storeroom and then went out of the hut, closing the door behind her and leaving the young couple together. The bridegroom then joined his wife in her bed and for the first time they were allowed full sexual intercourse together. Moreover, since the day of the formal betrothal they had not been allowed to so much as touch each other's hands, although prior to that day they had probably been lovers in the restricted *nguĩko* manner for a long time. In the normal course of events the bride was still physically a virgin at this time. Her husband, on the other hand, had by now probably had full sexual intercourse once or twice with the wives of men belonging to his own initiation age-group, and knew the correct procedure connected with full intercourse, having been instructed by them in the art of love.

Next morning, having had intercourse with his bride twice, he was to clear his throat loudly so that his mother might hear the signal and know that the sacrifice was completed (*igongona nĩrĩathira*). This signal was important, for until it had been given no one might go near the hut, and often a bridegroom did not achieve the second sex act with his bride until fairly late the next morning. In the unfortunate event of a young bridegroom being unable to achieve two acts of sexual (p.783) intercourse with his bride that night, he had to send a message to some virile friend of his to come and perform this sacrifice on his behalf, for the sacrificial aspect of this sex act was far more important than the feelings of either bride or bridegroom.

Procedures following the Consummation

As soon as the young bride's mother-in-law heard her son give the signal by clearing his throat, she sent a small boy and a small girl—who both had to have been through the ceremony of second birth—to go and knock on the door of the. bride's hut, for these two had to be the first visitors that the bride and bridegroom received in their new home. This was called *kũrokerũo nĩ nyoni njega* (to be called upon in the morning by good omens), and as soon as the children had entered they were given food as the first formal act of hospitality on the part of the bride and bridegroom. After these little visitors had departed, the bride was brought a razor by her mother-in-law and was told to shave a little hair from her husband's head. Following this, the young man's father and mother paid a formal call on the young couple, and the father brought several goats and sheep as presents for his son and daughter-in-law. (In some families the *mbũriya kahiũ*, which was given to the bride on the day of the *ngoima* feast, was not taken to the hut on the night that the marriage was consummated, but was brought by the young man's father on the following morning with his own present of goats and sheep).

The bride was then given a sharp knife and told to trim the thatch which was hanging untrimmed over the doorway of her hut. When she had done this she handed the knife to her mother-in-law, who trimmed the rest of the thatch round the eaves of the hut. After this the bride was taken by her mother-in-law to the family gardens, where she did a little ceremonial weeding of sweet potatoes, and dug up a few of them to signify that she was now a member of the family of her husband and that her duties as cultivator lay in his family's fields. That night she roasted these potatoes for herself and her husband, but otherwise she did no cooking yet, as food for both her husband and

herself was brought to them by her mother-in-law. On this night, the seventh since the girl had been brought from her own home, she and her husband slept together in her bed, but on no account might they (p.784) have full sexual intercourse. They might, however, have the restricted intercourse known as *nguĩko*.

The Ceremony of Gũcokia Makinya kwa Nyina (*To Retrace her Steps to her Mother's Home*)

On the following day, the second full day after the night when the marriage was consummated, the bride was escorted to her parents' home by one of the younger wives of her father-in-law to visit her own mother. This constituted the ceremonial recognition of the fact that a married woman's first duty in regard to paying visits was to her own mother.

The bride took with her a small present of cooked food, cooked for her in her hut by one of the other women, as she herself still might do no cooking. She spent the day with her mother, and in the afternoon when she started back to her own home, she was handed the *gĩtete* bottle gourd which had originally contained the *njohi ya gũthugumithĩria mbũri*. This now became her own property.

When she arrived home again, on the eighth night after she had been first taken from her own home, she and her husband again had to have full ceremonial sexual intercourse twice. After this they could assume normal married fife as far as sexual activities were concerned, and sleep together whenever they wished to do so, provided that they observed the normal laws of the tribe on this matter.

From the day that the bride was carried off by her husband until the day when she took the bottle gourd back to her new home, the fire in her mother's hut was on no account to go out, nor might her father go to that hut and sleep with her mother. Then, after the bride had paid the ceremonial visit to her mother, had gone home again, and had had the final sacrificial sexual intercourse with the bridegroom, her mother and father allowed two days to pass, after which they, too, had ceremonial sexual intercourse on behalf of their daughter.

It should be noted here that in connection with the marriage ceremonies the girl's father and mother had had ceremonial sexual intercourse twice before, once on the day after the ceremonial *ngoima* feast, and once on the day following the slaughter of the *thenge ya ngurario*. The parents of the bridegroom had no ceremonial sex acts to perform at all in connection with the marriage of their son, but from the day when the bride was brought home to her mother-in-law's hut until the day after the young couple had performed the second ceremonial (p.785) sex act on the eighth night, they had to take care not to have sexual contact, because if they did they would "spoil their son's sacrifice".

The Ceremony of Kũrugũria Nyũmba (*Having a House-warming Party for the New Hut*)

Several days after the second act of ceremonial sexual intercourse, the young man's father started proceedings for the final ceremony which would enable the young couple to start normal life in all respects. He arranged for beer to be prepared, and the brewing pots were set to ferment in the new bride's hut.

Early next morning he and the young man's mother came with one other council elder and his wife, bringing with them two or three sheep as a present for the young couple. They entered the hut and the father told his son to wash his hands, and then draw one hornful and one drinking gourd cupful of beer from the brewing vessel. These the son handed to his father, who proceeded to pray to the ancestral spirits to bring blessing upon this new home and make it prosper. Having done so, he poured the beer over the hearthstones as an offering to the ancestors. The son then refilled the two

vessels and the father went out into the courtyard, where he prayed to God—facing each of the four sacred mountains in turn—again asking for blessings upon the new home, this time calling upon God, not the ancestors.

He then went back into the hut and his son filled the two vessels, this time handing the horn to his father and the gourd cup to his mother. They each took a sip and spat it out on their chests "to bless themselves" and then drank the rest. Again the two vessels were filled and handed to the young man's parents, who passed them on to the council elder and his wife who were present as witnesses. They, too, blessed themselves and then drank. After this the two vessels were again filled by the bridegroom, and he and his bride each took some, blessed themselves, and drank a little, even though neither of them were of an age to drink beer in ordinary circumstances. This was a sacrifice and was therefore an exception. After this the beer was poured off, and men and women friends who were of beer drinking status came and shared it with the bridegroom's father and mother.

Next morning, a small ram was killed "to spill blood for the new homestead" (*ya kũgurarĩria mũciĩ*). This was slaughtered outside the bride's hut in her courtyard and the joints which were normally boiled were put to cook in her hut. The bride had to eat some of this meat—the first time she had eaten meat in her own home—and by (p.786) doing so she showed that she was now a full member of the family she had married into. Should she refuse to eat this meat, she could be driven out and divorce proceedings started at once, for as a member of the family she had to eat the family meat, otherwise when there was a family sacrifice she would spoil its efficaciousness by refusing to partake.

It often happened that a bride was "shy" of eating the meat of the new family, because from earliest childhood she had been taught not to eat meat at other people's homes if they were not blood relatives. Should this happen, she was allowed to have the meat disguised by mixing it up with *irio* (a vegetable dish).

The Bride's Clothing

It was customary for a man to provide his daughter with a complete new set of leather garments just before she was married, and if a father neglected to do so on the grounds that her existing clothes were in excellent condition or for any other reason, the bridegroom had the right to demand a *mbũri ya nguo* (a sheep for clothing) from his father-in-law, as soon as all the above ceremonies had been completed and as soon as he had started normal married life with his bride. With this sheep he would buy skins for the first new suit of clothes that his bride demanded of him.

Instructions to the Bridegroom

When a young man married his first wife it was incumbent upon his father to give him certain definite instructions concerning the laws of behaviour of a married man, just as, when the son had reached warrior status, he had been instructed as to how a warrior should behave. The amount of instruction given by a father to his son on marriage varied with individuals, but certain rules and laws had to be taught, and these were imparted to the son during the four days when the bride was in ceremonial mourning (*kĩrĩro*). The following are the most important of the instructions that were given to every man.

1. In no circumstances whatsoever either have or attempt to have intercourse with your wife from behind (*kũmũrutia na thutha*). This is strictly taboo and if you do so you will surely die.

p.787

2. If you have intercourse with your wife and find that her menses have just started so that the blood has touched your body, do not hide the fact, but come and tell your father and mother at once next morning in order that you and your wife may be purified. If you fail to do so, either you or your wife will surely die, for this is a great evil.

3. If you are aware that your wife's menses have started, do not attempt to have intercourse with her till they are over, for this is very evil.

4. If your wife should at any time touch your genitalia with her hands either by accident or deliberately, come at once and tell your parents so that you may both be purified. This is a very great uncleanness.

5. Do not touch your wife's breasts with your mouth or lips. Should you do so, deliberately or accidentally, you will die unless you are ceremonially purified.

6. In no circumstances have intercourse with your wife in the fields or in the bush, but only in her own hut.

7. In no circumstances have intercourse with your wife while the goats and sheep are out grazing. This is very evil, but you will not die from it.

8. In no circumstances have intercourse with your wife while lying by the outer wall of the bed so that you are to the left of her. Always lie on the inner side of the bed nearest the centre of the hut when you go to sleep with your wife.

9. When you have intercourse with your wife always see to it that your legs and thighs are enclosed by hers, and not hers by yours, for that is very evil.

10. Never have intercourse with your wife in such a way that your penis can slip and ejaculate semen on to the oxhide sleeping mat. If this should happen, it is a great evil, and before you sleep with your wife again you must arrange with someone else of your own initiation age-group to sleep with her first and thus remove the evil.

In addition to these laws, most fathers gave their sons who were about to marry much general instruction on behaviour, and every father finally urged his son to come and consult him whenever he was in doubt on any point.

p.788

Instructions to the Bride

Sometime after her formal betrothal, but always before a bride was married, her mother gave her detailed instructions as to the correct behaviour of a married woman. These instructions included warnings about the same sexual taboos that were given to her husband, to which were added the following extra rules.

1. Whenever you cook food or prepare gruel in your own hut for your husband and yourself, take a little to your father-in-law in his hut and some also to your mother-in-law, so that they may know that you are a good member of the family.

2. If men who are members of your husband's initiation age-group come to visit your husband, feed them well and be pleasant to them so that you may be well spoken of.

3. Obey your husband and feed him well.

4. If you should conceive, after the third month of pregnancy go and tell your mother-in-law, so that she may tell your husband and warn him not to have full intercourse with you any more, or at least not regularly.

5. During the first three months of pregnancy, encourage your husband to sleep with you often, for this is good. It will cause the child that is forming in your womb to be strong. (This is called *kũrera mwana*).

6. Be respectful to your parents-in-law in all things.

Other general instructions and information as to household duties were always given to a greater or lesser extent, and varied from one family to another.

Variations in the Customs of Marriage

Marriage of a First Wife

If a girl who had been initiated in accordance with the Ũkabi guild became betrothed to a man of the Kikuyu guild, or *vice versa*, she had (p.789) to go through the ceremony of "changing" (*kũgarũra*) from a member of one guild to a member of the other. This ceremony was performed by a medicine-man on the day that the bride was going to enter her own hut for the first time so as to consummate the marriage.

The customs and ceremonies in connection with the marriage of a man of the Ũkabi initiation guild were the same as those for the Kikuyu initiation guild, save only that on the wedding night the bride was anointed with ram's fat and red ochre instead of castor oil and red ochre.

It sometimes happened that when a young man married his first wife he decided not to build her a hut straight away, but to let her live in her mother-in-law's hut for the time being. In such circumstances, after the bride had been carried off by the bridegroom and brought to his mother's hut, she spent the four days prescribed for "mourning" in the normal way with her companions. Then, on the fifth day, when her hut would ordinarily have been built, she and her husband consummated the marriage in the girls' bed of her mother-in-law's hut. They did not, however, have ceremonial sexual intercourse, and none of the ceremonies described above took place at this time.

Later, when the girl had conceived, a hut was built for her, and then, and only then, did the ceremonies including the ceremonial sex acts and the ceremonial visit to her mother, take place. Meanwhile, the bride and bridegroom were considered to be *ta atharia* (like adulterers), and were "living in sin" from the Kikuyu point of view, even though the whole marriage negotiation had been completed and the girl had been taken officially, with the consent of her parents, to her husband's home. This shows that, to the Kikuyu mind, the marriage was not consummated by simple sexual intercourse, but only by ceremonial sexual intercourse with its attendant rites and ceremonies.

In certain Kikuyu families, on the day that the bride was taken to her new hut for the first time, a ram was slaughtered and its stomach contents put into a green banana bark receptacle. This was then put at the entrance to her hut and she had to dip her left foot into it twice (*gũcũnĩria*) and then step over it (*gũtagarara*). The green banana bark receptacle was then moved to the entrance of her bed, and the same procedure was repeated before she got into bed. The receptacle was then placed at the head end of her bed, where it remained until it rotted. The meat of the ram was put to boil in the new hut, and "tasted" that night, but not eaten until the next day, when a young man of the

husband's age-group (who also belonged to a family that observed this particular ceremony) had to be invited to come and eat the sacrum with the lumbar and caudal vertebrae attached (*rũcuthĩ*), and half the pelvic bone with part of the leg meat attached (*rũhonge*).

p.790
Having thus discussed the normal marriage of a first wife among the Kikuyu, we must proceed to the marriage of a second wife and the attendant ceremonies.

Normal Marriage of a Second Wife by a Warrior

As we have already seen in Chapter 18, men ranked as *aanake* (warriors liable for military service) until such time as the next regiment age-group had been completed and had taken over all military control. As we have also seen, this meant that every senior warrior was a married man, and in many cases his children were already themselves being initiated before the time came for him to retire from the warrior class. Long before they ceased to be warriors, therefore, many men wanted to marry a second wife and sometimes even a third or fourth.

If a man was the eldest son of a family and his father was wealthy, he sometimes had a second wife provided for him by payments from the family stock. Usually, though, a father would say to his son, "I have provided you with one wife and I have other sons who are still unmarried to consider. Therefore if you want a second wife you must make the marriage payments yourself, or at least provide a very high proportion of them and let me and the family contribute only a little".

As far as the beer that was needed for all the various rites and ceremonies was concerned, every man, once he had one wife of his own, had to accept full responsibility for providing all that would be required, and this had to be brewed in his first wife's hut.

Apart from these minor points, the normal procedure for the marriage of a second wife did not vary greatly from that for a first wife. The young man was expected to consult his father in all matters, the negotiations were conducted through his father as before, his father performed such ceremonies as the prayers to God and to ancestral spirits on behalf of his son, and any animals slaughtered at the bridegroom's home were slaughtered at the entrance to his mother's hut and not at his first wife's hut. On the other hand, when all the marriage payment negotiations had been completed and the second bride was "carried off" and brought to the young man's home, she was not taken to his mother's hut, but to the hut of his first wife, and it was in the first wife's hut that she spent her four days of "mourning".

p.791
Moreover, in all the subsequent ceremonies such as anointing the bride with oil and red ochre, setting up her hearth stones, bringing the husband and bride food to eat before they had ceremonial intercourse, etc. it was the first wife and not the husband's mother who was involved. A man's initiation bow remained in the first wife's hut, however, so that part of the ceremony was omitted.

When the ceremony of *rugũria nyũmba* (the house-warming party) took place for the second wife, the man's father and mother came to offer the beer to God and the ancestral spirits, but they did not bring a present of goats and sheep, nor did they make any such present on the day the marriage was consummated.

Sometimes a man who married a second wife did not immediately build her a hut of her own; that is to say, he postponed the consummation of the marriage by ceremonial sexual intercourse and the other associated rites and ceremonies. In such cases he did not, of course, postpone having normal sexual intercourse with her, and if she was not to have a hut of her own immediately after

the mourning was over, he could do one of two things. He could take her to live with him in his men's hut until such time as she was pregnant, and then build her a hut and consummate the marriage by ceremonial sexual intercourse; or he could, with his first wife's permission, let the second wife share the hut of the first wife for the time being. In such a case the three, husband, first wife, and second wife, all slept in the woman's bed together, the second wife sleeping on the side nearest the wall, with the husband in the middle, and the first wife near the entrance to the bed. If such an arrangement was made, two rules had to be strictly observed by the husband. 1. He might never on any account have sexual intercourse with the second wife in the first wife's hut unless the first wife was present. 2. If he wanted to have intercourse with his second wife, he first had to offer to do so with the first wife, and if she wished it, had to comply with her request before turning over to the second wife, who was lying on the other side of the bed. If a man broke either of these rules he was liable to divorce, and would probably lose his first wife and not get any of the marriage insurance back.

The elderly Kikuyu women who were first wives and with whom I discussed this matter said that they never felt jealous because their husband slept with a second wife in their bed and in their presence, for he satisfied them first. Their whole upbringing, including their lives as maidens (when a man often had two lovers with him simultaneously) had accustomed them to such a situation and they did not regard it as strange.

p.792

Alternative Method of Marriage of a Second Wife by a Warrior

As we have already seen, a young warrior who had married a first wife did not cease to be a warrior because of this. He continued to take part in all the dances of the warriors, to *ũmba* (make love to) the girls and have them as his *nguiko* lovers (girls with whom he had restricted intercourse) until such time as the members of the succeeding regiment age-group paid the fee for the control of unmarried, initiated girls. This meant that after a young man had married his first wife, he frequently brought girls who were his lovers (*anyanya*) to sleep with him in his hut in the restricted form of intercourse known as *nguiko*. His wife would have no objection at all to this. She cooked food for her husband's lovers, and they came to sit in her hut and talk with her before returning to the men's hut for the night to sleep with her husband.

It not infrequently happened that one of the girls who became the *mũnyanya* or *nguiko* lover of a young married man became so fond of him, and he of her, that they decided to get married. In such a case it was customary for the girl to *regera* (to refuse to leave a place) at his home, that is to say, to announce firmly (with the connivance of the husband) that she did not intend to return home any more, and was going to stay on with the young man as his wife. This was a recognised way for the marriage negotiations for a second wife of a warrior to start, and the subsequent procedure was as follows.

The young husband went to his father and said to him, "So-and-so's daughter will not leave my home, what shall I do?" His father then asked him if he wished to marry the girl and he answered that he did. The father then enquired if the young man had sufficient resources to supply the necessary beer, etc. and whether he had stock that he could use for the marriage payments. If the answer was satisfactory, he told his son to brew beer at once and invite the girl's father to come and drink it.

Before the beer drinking started on the appointed day, the young man's father said to the girl's father, "We have invited you to drink this beer because, *nĩtũkũiyĩte; twĩ na mbũri yaku haha*" (We

have stolen from you; we have a sheep of yours here). To this the girl's father answered, "*Nĩ mbũri mbũri, kana nĩ mbũri mũndũ*?" (Is it a sheep that is a sheep, or a sheep that is a person). The answer was that it was a human sheep and the girl's father then knew that his daughter was living with the young man. He said, "Give me beer to drink and let (p.793) me go away to consider the matter". The girl was left behind with the young man and not taken back to her home.

When he had returned home, the girl's father called a family conference. Unless there was a very serious bar to the marriage, such as a deathbed curse forbidding a marriage alliance between the two families, the council took a philosophical view of the matter and said, "If our daughter won't leave that place, we had better let her marry the young man". A message was then sent to the young man to brew beer and bring it on a given day to the girl's home. This was called *njohi ya kuuga ũici* (beer to announce the theft). In other words, it was a beer feast at which all the girl's relatives and the public in general would be informed that the girl had been seduced and that the young man was going to marry her.

This having been done, all the subsequent proceedings and ceremonies differed from those of a normal first or second marriage only in such respects as were affected by the fact that the girl was already living in her future husband's home, as his physical, but not as yet his legal, wife. For instance, in these circumstances it was customary for the young man to build the girl a hut of her own before the legal marriage proceedings were completed, and the ceremonies of mourning were omitted, as were all the ceremonies associated with *njohi ya kũhoya mũrĩmi* (the beer for asking for the cultivator).

When the hut was built, and the girl moved into it, even if the marriage payments had not yet been made, and the marriage had not been legally completed, the first night that the couple slept in the hut they had to have ceremonial sexual intercourse to consummate the marriage in advance. Later, when the payments had been made and all the *ngoima* beasts slaughtered, the girl had to make the ceremonial visit to her mother, and when she came home that night, the second act of ceremonial sexual intercourse took place, thus completing the legal consummation of the marriage.

Normal Procedure for All Marriages after the Second

Once a man had two wives, even though he was officially still a member of the warrior class and liable for military service, he was expected to settle down to life as father of a family. He gradually ceased to attend the dances of the young men and girls, and even when he attended them he might not *ũmba* (make love to) the girls in order to have (p.794) restricted intercourse with them. If, however, he wished to marry a third and even a fourth wife while still a member of the warrior class and provided that through raiding expeditions and other circumstances he could afford to do so, he was at liberty to please himself. Having now two wives of his own, he was completely independent of his father, and all the necessary negotiations took place directly between himself and the father of the girl he wished to marry.

Although he might, if he wished, make love to and privately propose to the girl who was his choice for a third or later wife, this was not the normal procedure. Instead, he had two alternatives. If he liked he could consult with his senior wife, persuade her to make friends with the girl, and get her to propose on his behalf, or else he could brew beer, invite the girl's father to come and drink it, and then inform him of his desire and ask him to plead with his daughter on his behalf.

If he adopted the former course and got his senior wife to propose on his behalf, and if the girl accepted the proposal, then he brewed beer for the girl's father and formally asked for a marriage

alliance, with the advance knowledge that the girl was willing. If he merely approached the girl's father, the latter called the girl's mother and some of the other women and sent them to the daughter concerned to tell her that so-and-so had asked for her in marriage and that he, the father, favoured the match. If the girl was getting on in years and had no young man who was making love to her, she would almost certainly accept straight away, for every Kikuyu girl wanted to have a husband, home, and children of her own, and if she had been an initiated girl for several years without a proposal from a warrior who wanted her as a first or second wife, she would hesitate to miss such an opportunity by refusing.

If, on the other hand, the girl concerned was the lover of some young man who had not as yet made his formal proposal to her father, she would send a message back to her father saying, "Father, if you want me to marry, tell me so, and I will tell the man whose *ithaga* (present or ornament) I have, to come and speak with you at once. I do not wish to marry the man who has asked for my hand through you and if you make me marry him against my will I will make trouble". Usually a father would not press the point in such circumstances, because he knew that it was a waste of time and would probably end in divorce. However, if the girl merely refused the suit, and could not put forward the name of any other proposed husband, her father would probably be firm with her, nor would she be likely to object at all strongly, for she knew that the life of a junior wife of a man who had other wives was not at all unpleasant, as a young wife often became the favourite and got the best of everything.

p.795
A man who proposed to marry a second, third, or later wife, but who had not handed over to the parents of a former wife all the things demanded of him at the ceremony of *kuuna mĩtĩ* (breaking sticks—the ceremony at which the amount of the marriage payments was agreed upon) could marry again only if he obtained the permission of that father-in-law. Such permission was seldom given, for a man objected strongly to his son-in-law taking another wife when he had still not fulfilled all his obligations in connection with the previous one.

Once preliminary negotiations had been completed, the whole of the rites and ceremonies connected with the marriage of the third wife were the same as those for a first from the time of the *njohi ya njũrio* (beer for the proposal) to the time of the *mbũri ya gũcina ndara* (ram for burning the roasting platform), save only that the man himself, not his father, was in charge of all negotiations. From the ceremony of the *mbũri ya gũcina ndara* onwards, however, the procedure was different in certain respects.

In the first place, the girl's future husband did not go to fetch his bride and take the *njohi ya kũhoya mũrĩmi* (beer to ask for the cultivator). Instead he sent his other wives and they brought her to his home and took her straight to one of their huts, instead of taking her to her husbands mother's hut. The girls of her family came to keep her company there during the mourning period, and as soon as it was over and they had gone home, the husband came and slept one night with the wife who owned the hut. The new bride slept in the same bed, near the outer wall of the hut. On the following night he came again, and this time he slept with his new bride, while his other wife shared the same bed and even gave guidance and instruction to her new co-wife as to how to lie in order that the husband might have intercourse with her.

Later on the husband built a hut for the new bride, and when she moved into it the marriage was consummated officially in accordance with the customs already described, but it was the wife to whose hut the bride was first taken who performed the duties of the bridegroom's mother.

Polygamous Marriages of Wealthy Individuals

In Kikuyu, up to the end of the nineteenth century, it was rare for any man to have more than six wives (the majority seldom had more than two), but a few men had as many as nine. In the case of a man with eight or nine wives, it not infrequently happened that his most (p.796) junior wives were chosen for him by his senior wives (or else by himself), without any reference to the wishes of the girl, but simply by arrangement with her father. In a sense, such marriages could be called "forced marriages", yet although there was certainly coercion if the girl was really unwilling to go to the husband chosen for her she usually managed to find some means of escape.

Men who had eight or nine wives were sometimes placed in a very difficult position by this fact, for by law and custom, if a man had had ceremonial sexual intercourse with one wife in connection with any of the many ceremonies demanding such an act, he could not then have ceremonial intercourse of a sacrificial nature (*maambura ma igongona*) with any of his other wives for a month following the month in which the act had taken place. This meant that at the very most he could have ceremonial sexual intercourse with six of his wives in any one year.

Because of this, and the fact that circumstances demanding such ceremonial sex acts were likely to arise far more often than this in a family of such size, it was customary for polygamists to arrange with men of their own initiation age-group to have ceremonial sexual intercourse with their various wives when it was necessary. A wealthy man with, say, nine wives, might appoint four men to act on ceremonial occasions with as many of his wives, and thus ease his burden.

It is noteworthy that all Kikuyu women whom I questioned, asking whether they objected to having men whom they did not care for perform such acts with them, replied, "Why should we mind when we know that such acts are as much for our benefit and the benefit of our children as for anybody else ? These acts are sacrifices. Who minds about a sacrifice? It is not a personal matter".

Marriage Arrangements for a Ndungata (*Serf or Dependant*)

So far we have considered the marriages of men who were sons of men of normal means, or who were themselves wealthy enough to be able to marry in accordance with the normal customs of the tribe. In Kikuyu country, however, there were always a certain number of men who were in a slightly inferior social position to the rest, and who were called *ndungata* (serfs or dependants).

A man became a serf either because he was an orphan with no close relatives, or because for one reason or another he and/or his (p.797) family had lost all their possessions. He had no hope of ever marrying in the normal way. Such a man usually left his own territorial area where he was well known and where he felt ashamed of putting himself in the position of a serf, and went to some rich man in another part of Kikuyu country to offer his services as an unpaid servant in return for food and shelter.

If in the course of time he found that he got on well with his patron, he went to him and said that he would like to have a wife. Provided that the rich man liked his serf, such a request was seldom refused. There were four courses then open to the rich man. 1. He could give him one of his own daughters in marriage without any marriage payments. 2. He could treat him as a son and negotiate a marriage for him with some other family. 3. He could persuade some young widow, the responsibility for whom he had inherited, to become the physical wife of this serf. 4. He could arrange to let the serf marry one of his daughters and make the marriage payments slowly, as he was able, over a long period of time.

We must now, therefore, consider the customs and ceremonies connected with each of these four different ways by which such a person could obtain a wife and beget children.

1. A wealthy man would give one of his daughters in marriage to a serf without the normal payments only if he had a daughter living at home who had already had a child out of wedlock, or who was so unattractive that there was no prospect of her ever being married in the normal way. In such circumstances, he built a hut for her and told her to take the serf as a physical husband, to feed him, and to look after him. The serf then helped her in her gardens and begot children by her. Any children of such a marriage, which was a perfectly legal one, took their names from the mother's family, belonged to their mother's clan, and lived in the homestead of their mother's father. In other words, such a marriage was wholly matrilineal and matrilocal.

Since these children belonged to their mother's family and not to the serf's, her father (or on his death her brothers) had to assume full responsibility for all fees for such ceremonies as second birth, and initiation. However, as the physical father of the children, the serf was responsible for purely ceremonial matters, such as the ceremonies connected with *kuoera* when any of his daughters had their first menses, and all acts of ceremonial sexual intercourse in connection with the second birth, initiation, etc. had to be performed by him. Moreover, as the formally recognised (p.798) physical husband of the woman, he received such shares of beer and meat joints as normally went to the husband in connection with such ceremonies.

On the other hand, in such a matrilineal and matrilocal marriage, the physical father had no authority over his wife's children, this lying with the woman's father during his lifetime and with her senior brother after his death. When these children grew up and married, the grandfather, or a maternal uncle, was in charge of all the negotiations, and not the father, though it was the latter who was responsible for all the ceremonial rites required when one of his daughters was married.

2.If a wealthy man decided to negotiate a marriage for his serf as though he were a son, all the negotiations and proceedings took place as though it was a normal marriage of a first wife, and as if the serf were the rich man's legal son. However, when the bride had been brought home, her hut built, and the marriage consummated, the serf's position was still only that of physical husband of his wife and physical father of his children. The children took their family and clan names from the family of the benefactor who had made the marriage payments on behalf of his serf. As husband of the woman and father of the children, however, the serf had to perform all ceremonial rites for them, but any fees that were due had to be paid by the benefactor, and after the benefactor's death by his eldest son.

Should a serf who had been given a wife in this way decide to leave his benefactor, he was told quite firmly that he might go if he wished, but that neither his wife nor his children could go with him. Although his position was quite legal, it was his benefactor who had made the marriage payments, and therefore the serf's wife and family had to remain with the benefactor's family, of which they had become an integral part.

If a serf became the adopted son of his benefactor and a full adoption ceremony was performed, then his adopted father negotiated a marriage for him as above, but later, should he wish to move away, he might do so, for his position as an adopted son was the same as if he were a real son, and his wife and children were legally under his authority.

3. If a wealthy man had inherited authority over, and responsibility for, a young widow of his father's or of some elder brother, he might, if he wished, request her to take a serf as a physical husband. This serf then lived with her in her hut, begot children by her, worked in her gardens with her, and in general became (p.799) her recognised husband. The children born of such a union were, however, legally the children of the deceased first husband for whom the serf was "raising up seed". The position of these children was, in fact, the same as that of any whom the woman bore before her first husband's death, and they were named after his and her families according to the recognised naming customs.

The serf acted as father in all rites and ceremonies connected with the children he begot, but he was not responsible for any of the ceremonies connected with the children of his wife by her former husband, and when they were "born again", initiated, or involved in some other ceremony for which ceremonial sexual intercourse with their mother was necessary, it was not the serf who performed these ceremonial sex acts, but some member of the deceased husband's initiation age-group who, as such, had the right to call her, "*Mũka wakwa*" (My wife). On these occasions the serf had temporarily to leave his wife, and he returned to his normal life with her only when the ceremonies were over.

4. If a wealthy man chose to do so, he could allow his serf to take one of his daughters as a wife. The serf agreed, in return, to make marriage payments for her, but gradually, as and when he could, and so become the girl's legal as well as physical husband, and the legal father of the children, with full authority over them. In such circumstances the serf named the children after his own family and they were recognised as members of his clan. If such a marriage was arranged between a serf and a member of his benefactor's family, the negotiations, rites, and ceremonies were much simpler than those involved in an ordinary marriage. The serf was not required to brew beer for all the various ceremonies, such as *njohi ya njũrio* (beer for the proposal), *njohi ya kaarĩki-inĩ* (beer at the little castor oil tree), etc. nor did he have to provide all the *ngoima* animals on one day. He was allowed, instead, to hand over goats and sheep to his father-in-law as and when he could. A tally of these was kept, ad every now and then one was killed to represent one or other of the *ngoima* animals.

The ceremonial consummation of marriage took place as soon as the girl had been provided with a hut of her own, but such ceremonies as *kĩrĩro* (mourning), *gũcokia makinya kwa nyina* (the bride's first visit to her mother), and even the ceremony of *gũkura* (when the bride ate her first meat in the new home), did not take place. The failure to observe these ceremonies in connection with such a marriage did not invalidate its legality at all, and the children born of such a marriage were under the serf's authority (p.800) alone, as was his wife, and they could not be taken from him if he chose to move away, provided that he had already made some of the marriage payments and had promised to pay the rest.

It should be noted here that a serf who had married in the circumstances described in 1, 2, and 3 could at a later date change his position to that described under 4 if he made the marriage payments.

Marriage of one Woman to Another

In certain circumstances a woman could become the legal husband of another woman according to Kikuyu law and custom, and such marriages were by no means rare. The circumstances which gave rise to such marriages were as follows.

Sometimes a man who had no living brother, half-brother, or son died leaving everything to his widow or widows, rather than to a male cousin, as would normally have been the case. If all of these widows were still of childbearing age they might all take lovers with a view to bearing sons who would inherit the property and keep the family name alive. If one among them was past childbearing herself, she had the right, and was indeed actually expected, to marry a wife herself, in order that her wife might bear sons, thus preserving the family name and keeping the family property intact. All children born to the wife of a widow then became the children of the widow's deceased husband's family and clan.

When such a woman decided to marry a girl, she usually first proposed to the girl herself, and then asked some elderly male friend to assist her in the negotiations as though she were his son. The whole negotiations were then carried out exactly in the manner described for the normal marriage of a first wife, the marriage payments and the stall-fed animals, etc. being provided by the widow. When the time came for the girl to be taken to her husband's home for the ceremony of *kĩrĩro* (mourning) she was taken to her "husband's" hut and not her husband's mother's hut, since her husband was a woman. Meanwhile, a hut for the young bride was being built, and when the girl moved in for the consummation of the marriage by ceremonial sexual intercourse, this sacrifice was performed by a man of the husband's age-group, chosen by the female husband to act for her. His bow, however, was not taken to the hut, since he was not the husband, but was merely acting for the husband.

p.801
After the pair of ceremonial sex acts had taken place twice, on the night when the bride moved to her new hut and again on the day after her ceremonial visit to her mother, the man who had acted on behalf of the female husband ceased to have anything to do with the bride. Her female husband then sent for her and asked her what man she would like as her physical husband for the rest of her life, and the girl chose a man for herself.

Usually this man was already married and had a home of his own elsewhere. Having been thus chosen, he told his own wife or wives of the arrangement and then, whenever he wished to be away from his own home in order to spend a night or several nights with the widow's wife, he told them where he was going so that they could get him if he was wanted at his own home in a hurry.

Girls were usually perfectly willing to be married by rich widows in this way, for they had a physical husband of their own choosing, and the prospect that every son they bore would become the inheritor of large flocks and possessions.

The physical husband of a widow's wife had, of course, no authority whatever over the children or over his physical wife's property when the female husband died. His part was simply that of a physical father. He was required, however, to perform all ceremonial sex acts and other ceremonial rites connected with the various *rites de passage* of his physical children.

There were cases of rich widows marrying not one, but several wives in this way and thus bringing an almost extinct family up to strength again.

If a widow's wife chose an unmarried man as her physical husband, as she was entitled to do, this man, so long as he remained unmarried, could not perform any ceremonial sex acts for his physical wife, either on her behalf or on behalf of their children, for as an unmarried man he was not entitled to do so. Therefore, when the need for such acts arose, the widow had to call in a married man for the occasion.

Marriage of a Girl who had become Pregnant before Marriage

If a girl broke the laws and customs of the tribe and allowed a man to have full sexual intercourse with her instead of the restricted form, and if as a result of this she became pregnant, she was made to confess who the father of the child was. He was then summoned, and if he (p.802) admitted paternity, he was asked whether or not he wanted to marry the girl. If he said that he did, all further negotiations were suspended until the birth of the child. Then, if by any chance the girl died in childbirth, the young man had to pay full compensation for her death (see Chapter 23). If she survived, marriage negotiations were entered into in the normal way already described. Having made the girl pregnant, however, in addition to all the marriage payments, the young man had to pay one *ngoima* beast to the council elders. This was called *mbũri ya gũthegemia* (a ram for causing increase), and had to be paid before the child was born and before the marriage negotiations were entered into. It represented a pledge on the part of the young man that he would marry this girl as soon as her baby had been born, or, if she died in childbirth, would pay compensation for her death, which he would have caused indirectly by his act of intercourse.

The *mbũri ya gũthegemia* was slaughtered by the council elders and a small piece of flesh and skin was cut from the tail of the ram forwards to its genitalia, including the foreskin round the penis. The elders laid this upon *mũthakwa* leaves and then each took a little of the ram's stomach contents into his mouth and spat it out over the bit of skin and flesh to bless it. It was carefully wrapped in the *mũthakwa* leaves and carried by one of the elders to the pregnant girl, who was instructed to rub it all over her body and her clothing. This was a token of the blessing of the council, and showed that they had investigated the case and received a promise from the girl's lover that he would marry her in due course.

If the young man failed to start negotiations for marriage after the birth of the baby, the elders then summoned him and he had to pay three more *ngoima* to the council elders, and a fine of nine goats and sheep to the father or guardian of the girl. This girl could then be married by someone else according to the normal marriage laws. The fact that she had already borne a child out of wedlock was not necessarily a bar to her marriage, for the child would become the legal child of whoever she married and would belong to his family, provided that he paid one *ngoima* beast and ten goats and sheep in order to have his position as legal father of the child recognised.

If, as the result of being *nguĩko* lovers for a long time, a girl and a man decided that they wished to marry, the girl might allow this one young man to have full intercourse with her. In so doing she was not involving herself in trouble, for in these special circumstances she would not be blamed, provided that as soon as she conceived she told her lover, and that he had previously agreed that he would then immediately open negotiations for marriage. Such a case did not come (p.803) before the council elders at all, and the world at large never knew much about it.

If by any chance a girl who was already betrothed to one man allowed another man to have full intercourse with her and make her pregnant, then that other man had to pay the fine of four *ngoima* and nine goats and sheep to her father, and the bridegroom had to be given ten other goats and sheep by the girl's father. The first fine could never be transferred directly to the girl's future husband.

Special Form of Proposal for a Motherless Boy

If a boy's mother died while he was young but after he had been through the second birth ceremony, he usually had to take up his headquarters in his father's hut. He slept there at night and shared in the food brought to his father each evening by the father's various wives.

After such a boy had been initiated and had become a warrior, the father usually decided that his son ought to have someone to act as mother to him, and more especially to supply him with food in the evenings so that he could entertain his friends, since the organisation of the homestead was such that a father could not do this for his son. In these circumstances it was customary for the father to look about for a family where there was a mother who had no living sons, only daughters. He then approached her husband and made an arrangement with him whereby the woman temporarily adopted this motherless young man, and promised to feed him and act as hostess to his friends. In return for this the young man placed the produce of all his own gardens at the disposal of his adopted mother, whom he called *maitũ* (my mother), just as he had his own mother, and for whom he did a certain amount of work. The young man so adopted, however, did not sleep in his adopted mother's hut, nor in her husband's hut, but in his own father's hut.

Such an adoption arrangement was always regarded as a form of betrothal to one of the daughters of the adopted mother. The daughter chosen was usually a young one who would not be marriageable for four or five years, and she and the young man were both told of the arrangement. They had to treat each other as people who were betrothed, be respectful to each other, and in no circumstances might they have restricted intercourse together or dance sexual dances as partners. On the other hand, if they did so, and even if they went further and (p.804) had full intercourse and the girl became pregnant, no fine would have to be paid. They were merely laughed at by their companions for having done something that made them rather shameful and ridiculous

Such betrothals nearly always eventuated in marriage, and it was a rare thing for the girl to refuse to marry a man betrothed to her thus unless he was a very unattractive person. If either party did object to the marriage, however, when the time came for negotiations to be opened they were at liberty to withdraw and refuse, but this rarely happened. The negotiations for such a marriage were carried out as described for the normal marriage of a first wife.

Marriage of Twins

As we have already seen in Chapter 14, first-born twins of a mother were not allowed to live, but twins born to a woman who had already had a normal single birth were always reared if possible. In the event of twin girls, great care was taken to record which was actually born first, and it was essential that she be married before her sister.

On the day that the elder of the twins was taken off to her husband's village (*hika*) for the mourning period, her twin had to perform the ceremony of *kũhika kwerũ* (to be married in the *kwerũ*). This ceremony required the younger twin to move from her mother's hut to the hut of one of her mother's co-wives. She took her own sleeping mat with her, but she had to sleep on it on the ground, on the left-hand side of the hut, in the *kwerũ* (the goats' and sheep's sleeping place). She had to continue to sleep there for the next eight nights, that is, until after her sister had paid her ceremonial visit of *gũcokia makinya kwa nyina*, had gone back to her new home, and the marriage had been consummated by the second of the ceremonial sex acts. After this, the unmarried twin could sleep in her mother's hut once more and resume normal life. When the second of the twins was married, the one who was already married did not have to perform this ceremony, as she was already a wife.

Divorce and Remarriage

By Kikuyu law, only two reasons for divorce were recognised once a marriage had been consummated. If a husband maltreated and abused (p.805) his wife she could appeal to her father to allow her to be divorced, and if a woman proved to be such a bad wife in all respects that her husband could not tolerate her, he could demand that she be taken back by her family- Even as far as these two reasons were concerned, a marriage could not be dissolved once the woman had given birth to more than one child by her husband. If more than one child had been born there could be no divorce (except in extremely rare cases), but only legal separation, which we shall examine separately.

If a wife returned to her own family due to maltreatment by her husband, her father or guardian would make preliminary enquiries, and if he found that his daughter was speaking the truth he would tell her to stay at his home until her husband came to fetch her. When the husband came, the father would say, "my daughter complains of your treatment, and if she is to go back to you it is only on condition that in the future you treat her properly". The husband made promises, and the daughter went back with him. If he changed his attitude to her, all was well, but if he continued to maltreat her, then she again returned to her father, and when her husband came once more to fetch her he was told that she was not going back. The case was then taken before the elders, and if it was proved that the woman was not really to blame at all, but her husband, then the divorce was granted and the husband was not allowed to claim the return of the marriage payments. The husband thus lost his wife, her child if she had one, and all the stock that had been handed over as marriage payments.

If a woman who had either not yet borne a child, or who had only one, absolutely refused to stay with her husband even though she could not prove ill-treatment and abuse, and gave no valid reason for leaving him, other than that she could not bear to live with him her family tried to persuade her to go back to him, but if they failed, then the case was taken before the *kĩama* council for a divorce. In such circumstances, since it was the woman and not her husband who was to blame, the court awarded the husband the return of all his original marriage payment stock, or an equivalent number, plus one further animal for every female in the stock he had handed over. Thus, if his marriage payment included 40 she-goats and ewes, he had to be given back 80 animals. As far as the stall-fattened animals handed over in connection with marriage negotiations were concerned, when a divorce took place the father or guardian of the girl had to hand back only one such animal, although he had received five of them, because, it will be remembered, in the course of the negotiations he had given four of them to the family of the bridegroom, so that the balance due was only one animal.

p.806
In connection with divorce proceedings, both the husband and the girl's father or guardian had to pay court fees of one fat ram each to the council elders, and in addition, the husband, whether being divorced or divorcing his wife, had to pay one more fat ram to the council elders when the case was over. This was called *ndũrũme ya gũtharia nyũmba* (the ram for pulling down the hut), and until it had been paid he could not pull down the hut of the divorced wife, which had to be done, as he might not leave it standing empty in his homestead, nor might he allow anyone else to occupy it.

When the divorce proceedings had been completed, the young divorced woman could marry again in accordance with the normal procedure already described. The only difference was that over and above the ordinary marriage payments, the new legal husband was required to pay 10 goats and

sheep and one *ngoima* animal extra, in order to become the legal father of a divorced woman's child by her first marriage.

In the few rare cases of a complete divorce after a woman had borne her husband two or more children, she never remarried, but went and lived in the home of her father or brother. A hut was built there for her, and she bore children by many different casual lovers whom she took as she pleased. All her children in such cases belonged to her father's family or clan.

Legal Separation and Remarriage

It is perhaps incorrect to use the word remarriage to describe a union between a man and a woman who was separated from her husband but not divorced. Yet since such unions were legally recognised, although they had a different status from other marriages, it is not easy to find a better English word than remarriage.

The circumstances which gave rise to such a position were usually as follows. If after having two or more children a husband and wife reached a position of complete disagreement and failed to live together amicably, divorce seldom took place; in fact, only two records of such a thing happening ever came to my notice. This followed from the fact that after the lapse of a sufficient number of years for the birth of two or more children to take place, the members of both families did their utmost to prevent a divorce, owing to the complications that would be involved. It was also felt that since every girl was given a number of opportunities to break off the engagement before her (p.807) marriage, once she had married she should have no further reason to change her mind.

Consequently, the normal and legally recognised custom in such *cases* was for the wife to return with her young children to her family home, but for the marriage payments not to be handed back. The marriage, therefore, was not dissolved, but a legal separation took *place*. When such a legal separation occurred, the wife went back to the homestead of either her father or one of her brothers. A hut was built for her there and she lived under the protection of her father or brother, who provided her with land to cultivate, clothing, and all other necessities of life, and, in fact, assumed full responsibility for looking after her.

The council elders who had decided the case and made the legal separation order made her husband pay one *ngoima* as a fee, which gave him permission to pull down the hut in which his wife had lived. The payment of this fee, followed by the pulling down of her old hut, showed that the separation was legally recognised and that the woman had not simply deserted in an illegal manner.

Having taken up residence in her new hut in her father's or brother's homestead and put herself into their care, such a legally separated woman might take any man she liked as her physical husband (provided he was not a blood relative). She then lived with this second husband and bore children by him perfectly openly. Her first husband, having been legally separated from her, could not claim that this new union was adulterous, for the position was quite legal. All children born of this second union, however, were legally the children of the husband from whom the woman had been legally separated.

As soon as any child born either of the first legal marriage or of the second remarriage reached an independent age (about 12 or 13), he or she had to return to the legal father and his family and clan. The males had to have wives provided for them by their legal father, and the girls, when married, would be married from his home and his family would benefit from the marriage payments.

Any animal sacrifices that had to be made for the woman after she had separated from her husband were provided by her father or brother, who had accepted responsibility, and later, when it was time for the children to return to their legal father, he had to repay all these things before he could demand that they return to him.

Ceremonial sex acts were performed by the woman's self-chosen physical husband in most cases, but in certain instances, such as in connection with the initiation of the children, a man of the first legal husband's age-group had to be called in.

p.808

Other Laws connected with Marriage

If a married woman failed to conceive, the husband might call upon her father or guardian to pay all the various fees in goats and sheep that had to be given to a medicine-man in order to diagnose the cause of her barrenness and to cure it (see Chapter 14). The fact that a woman was barren did not, however, mean that her husband could ask for the return of the marriage payments or claim another wife from her father, as was the case in the law of some other tribes.

If a woman who had been married died before she had borne a child, and provided always that she was not a person who had proved to be barren, then her family had either to return all the marriage payment animals, or provide the family of the bridegroom with another younger sister or half-sister, though this sister or half-sister could not become the wife of her dead sister's husband, but had to marry some other member of the family. She would, however, only be thus married if it was with her consent, otherwise the bridegroom's family would be told to wait, and when this sister was married elsewhere they would be given animals from the marriage payments equal to the number of those which they originally handed over for the woman who had died without any child.

Sex Life within the Marriage Bond

Once a man and his wife had consummated their marriage by the ceremonial sex acts that we have already described, they entered upon a normal sex life together, which, however, was governed by certain very definite restrictions and rules as described above. There were, in addition, codes of conduct for pregnant women.

As soon as a wife was known to have conceived, it was incumbent upon her husband to have full intercourse with her at frequent intervals during the first three months of pregnancy, for this was believed to be beneficial to the child's health, and was said to help to form a strong baby. After the third month, apart from such ceremonial sex acts as were essential in connection with rites and ceremonies for other children of the same woman, sexual intercourse was not encouraged, and in some families it was prohibited altogether. At the same time, there was nothing in law or custom to prevent a man from sleeping (p.809) in his wife's arms at such a time and having the restricted form of sexual intercourse known as *nguĩko*.

The taboo against full sexual intercourse with his wife after the third month of pregnancy—except at rare intervals—did not cause great hardship to a man, for he was always able at such times either to sleep with one of his other wives who were not under a taboo, or to visit some man of his own initiation age-group and sleep with one of that man's wives, a matter to be discussed presently. Also, of course, it must be remembered that most of the men who had only one wife were still warriors, and as such were entitled to have *nguĩko* lovers from among the unmarried girls.

After a woman had borne a child, her husband was forbidden to have intercourse with any woman at all until he had performed the ceremony of *gũtinia mĩruru ya mwana* with the mother of the new

child. After that, and until the baby's first teeth appeared, he might not have intercourse with the mother. From the time the baby cut its first teeth until it was weaned at about two years of age, he might have intercourse with his wife, but until weaning he had to be careful not to have intercourse on several successive nights, for should he do so it was held that he would cause the mother's milk to go thin and cold and so spoil the baby's health. He also had to take great care to avoid causing her to conceive before the child was weaned.

Conception was avoided in a variety of ways. In the first place, the wife took care to allow her husband to have full intercourse only at infrequent intervals, and without deep penetration. Second, she avoided her husband during the first few days after the menstrual period had passed, for this was believed to be the time when a woman was most likely to conceive. Third, should the woman fear that her husband might have caused conception, she would invite him to have full intercourse with her just before the next menstrual period was due. Many Kikuyu believed that the flow could be caused to start just by the act of intercourse even if impregnation had occurred. This view was not universally held, and was probably borrowed from the Maasai.

Wives who were past childbearing age did not necessarily cease to have sexual intercourse with their husbands. In fact, many of them continued to do so for many years after the climacteric, and by such frequent acts, atrophy of the sex organs was prevented or delayed.

Women past childbearing who took up the profession of midwives, however, had to give up all sexual contact with their husbands and with any other men, for if a midwife had sexual intercourse at all, it was believed that this would damage all the women she attended, as well as their babies. This taboo was so great that if, in an emergency, (p.810) a young woman should act as midwife, she had forthwith to be ceremonially purified before she could resume normal life.

The sex life of a man and woman who were living as husband and wife under any of the alternative forms of marriage which I have described was governed by the same rules as those for a man and woman married by normal marriage customs.

There were certain exceptions to the rule that a man might not have sexual intercourse with his wife anywhere except in her hut. The commonest of these was for those men who belonged to the soda miners guild (*aria menjaga igata*). These people, as we have seen in Chapter 13, took their wives with them when they went into Maasai country to Lake Magadi for soda. Their work was such that they were often away for a month at a time and it was a recognised thing that in their case they might have sexual intercourse with their wives in the caves, booths, and other shelters where they slept during their absence from Kikuyu country. Because of this fact, it was taboo for any man who was not a soda miner ever to have sexual intercourse with a soda miner's wife, even if the men were of the same age-group; if they did so they would become unclean.

Sex Life outside the Marriage Bond

As we have already seen, Kikuyu married men and women were not restricted by custom or law to sexual intercourse with their wives or husbands. There were, rather, a number of laws and customs which provided for sex acts between married men and women who did not stand in the relationship of husband and wife.

The commonest extra-marital sexual relationships were between a man's wife and the male members of that man's initiation age-group; in fact, the male members of any initiation age-group might address the wives of all other co-members as "my wife" (*mũka wakwa*), for these women were in theory the wives of all the males of their husband's age-group. Thus any man had the legal

right to have intercourse with the wives of men of his own initiation age-group. The following exceptions and rules, however, had to be observed.

1. A rule which overrode all other sexual "rights" was that which forbade the exercising of any of these rights with a woman who was a blood relation. The taboo against any form of incest was the most strict of all.

p.811

2. No man might sleep with the wives of men who were his blood relatives even though they were members of his own initiation age-group, for they were his relations-in-law (*athoni*).

3. Any men who had been initiated at the same homestead, who had been members of the same initiation lodge, and who, therefore, had the same initiation mother, might not even enter the hut of the wife of one of their number without first having acquired that right by a gift of goats and sheep. Such a gift gave them the right to enter the hut, of and accept food from, each other's wives, but they were still always forbidden to sleep with them. The men were, in fact, ceremonially brothers-in-law to these women, since they all had called the same woman "mother" at the initiation ceremonies.

4. Although a man had the absolute right to sleep in the same bed with any wife of another member of his initiation age-group (aside from those excepted above), he might not coerce her into allowing him to have intercourse. In fact, he might have full intercourse with her only if she invited him to do so.

5. It was also a rule that no man might claim the right to sleep in the same bed with the wife of a member of his initiation age-group if the husband himself wished to do so, or if the woman preferred to invite her own husband to come and spend the night in her hut.

6. Since all male members of a single initiation age-group were the "husbands" of the wives of each of their number, they might never in later life take the daughters of any of these women as their brides, for by doing so they would have been marrying their own daughters from a legal point of view as well as, quite possibly, from a physical one. In other words, the fact that a man had the right to sexual intercourse with a woman—even if he had never exercised that right—debarred him from ever marrying her daughter.

Once a regiment age-group had been completed and consolidated, all its members counted as members of a single initiation age-group as far as their rights with each other's wives were concerned, but in addition to the restrictions already noted, more exceptions were added, as follows.

1. Among members of the same regiment age-group, no man might exercise this right in respect of the wives of men who belonged to a division of that regiment age-group junior to his own.

p.812

2. No man might sleep with the wives of a man who, although a member of one of the senior divisions of his own regiment age-group, stood in the relationship of *mũruna* to him. A man was the *mũruna* of another man if that man and the first man's elder brother belonged to the same initiation age-group or division of the regiment age-group. This was because his brother had special rights with that man's wife or wives, so it would have been like sleeping with his elder brother's wife or wives, which was taboo.

3. No man might sleep with the wife of any member of his regiment age-group if that wife was the daughter of a man of his own initiation age-group, for such a woman was "as his daughter" as already described.

4. No man might sleep with any wife of a man who had acted as his sponsor when he was initiated, for the sponsor stood in the same relationship as a father, and therefore he would have been sleeping with his father's wife.

In the earlier part of this chapter, dealing with various forms of marriage, the remarriage of widows (other than widows who themselves became husbands by a legal form of marriage), was not discussed. This follows from the fact that in the ordinary course of events, widows were seldom remarried, but remained the legal wives of their deceased husbands, and merely took physical husbands in order to continue bearing children for their deceased husbands. The sex life of widows was therefore outside the marriage bond and must be discussed here, but the laws which governed the inherited responsibility of looking after a widow will be dealt with in Chapter 20, which includes a section on inheritance laws.

The fact that a widow had been inherited did not mean that the man who inherited her also inherited sexual rights to her. A man who inherited the widow of his deceased elder brother, for example, might sleep with her if she was agreeable, but he had no absolute right to have intercourse with her.

In most cases an inherited widow chose to sleep with men who belonged to the initiation age-group of her deceased husband, men who called her "my wife" legally. Any children she bore, of course, were the legal children of her legal husband, even though he was dead, and the legal responsibility to look after these children devolved not on their physical father, but on the man who had inherited the responsibility for the widow.

As we have noted again and again, there were many occasions when a ceremonial sex act connected with purification had to be performed (p.813) formed by a man other than the husband of the woman concerned. Such ceremonial sex acts outside the marriage bond were performed by men who were of the same initiation or regiment age-group as the woman's husband, and who had the legal right to sexual intercourse with her. A man who was normally debarred from such rights by any of the rules that have already been discussed was also legally debarred from performing such ceremonial sex acts, and might not be invited to perform them.

It was generally agreed by all Kikuyu men and women with whom I discussed this matter that in the old days neither party ever had any qualms about or objections to such ceremonial sex acts, since they knew that this was a religious ceremony performed for their own or a friend's benefit. No woman had the right to refuse such a ceremonial act with whatever man was detailed for the purpose, so that although in the ordinary course of events a Kikuyu woman was not expected to have full intercourse with any man against her will, this did not hold true of ceremonial acts of intercourse.

In spite of the strict rules governing the sexual relations between unmarried men and unmarried girls, which restricted them to the form of intercourse known as *nguiko*, there were certainly occasions when unmarried people who were indulging in *nguiko* gave way to temptation and had full intercourse. A girl who obeyed the strict rules of *nguiko*, and never allowed any young man to have full intercourse with her, and who in fact remained physically a virgin until her marriage, was

called *mũirĩtu mũthingu* (a good or moral girl). A girl who was known to allow young men more freedom than the law allowed was known as *mũirĩtu mwaganu* (a wicked or immoral girl).

Custom demanded that when young men and girls were going to spend the night in restricted intercourse (*nguiko*) several pairs should share the same large bed, this being in the nature of a safeguard. Then if a man tried to persuade a girl to have full intercourse with him she could call on the other pairs to support her in her refusal. Consequently, girls who were known to go off with young men for *nguĩko* alone were always suspected, and were the object of derision among the law-abiding girls and young men. Of course warriors discussed these things among themselves, and if they knew of a girl who allowed men full intercourse, many were tempted to make secret assignations with her. If such a girl then became pregnant, she was involved in considerate difficulties, because she had to name one of these men as the father of *the* child, and in all probability each would deny it. The situation *then* became a matter for the judicial body to deal with by civil law (see Chapter 23).

p.814

Adultery

Among the Kikuyu, owing to the fact that the laws governing sexual relations allowed a considerable degree of legal freedom, adultery (*ũtharia*) in the sense in which the Kikuyu understood the word was comparatively rare. Adultery was most common among young wives of elderly men, since they had often made many friends among the warriors before they married, and they commonly encouraged these men to come and sleep with them secretly. If a woman was caught having intercourse with a man other than those with whom she was legally entitled to do so, she was liable to be severely beaten, and then to have ewes' urine poured over her wounds to make them smart all the more. Some men punished adultery by breaking a nest of tree ants (*thambo*) over the woman, so that she was severely stung and bitten.

A man caught in adultery was taken before the council elders and had to pay a fine of three *ngoima* beasts to the elders, not to the woman's husband. The latter received one big he-goat from the father or guardian of the wife who had committed adultery.

In certain circumstances, adultery was connived at by old polygamous men who felt themselves unable to satisfy their wives. For instance, there was a recognised custom whereby an elderly man could call in a young warrior whom he knew to be friendly with one of his wives, but who had no right to have intercourse with her. He would say to the warrior, "*Iyĩraga maguta gũkũ gwakwa*". (Make a habit of coming to ask me for fat (to mix red ochre with)). This was a recognised formula for intimating that he would not raise any objection, start any proceedings against, or punish his wife, should the young man and the wife he was friendly with commit adultery. This formula was used because by law a man could not give permission for such procedure in so many words.

Sexual Perversion and Abuse

Instances of various forms of sexual abuse and sexual perversion occurred from time to time, but they were rare. These will be discussed in Chapter 23, "Law and Justice".

p.815

Abortion

Among the Kikuyu the use of abortifacients was rare, as there was a law with a severe penalty which absolutely forbade the practice of abortion. In spite of this, young men who had made girls pregnant and who were unwilling to marry them and were not in a position to pay the fine which

they knew would be imposed, sometimes had recourse to men known as *arogi* (workers in witchcraft who commonly dealt in poisons). Such men undertook to bring about an abortion for a fee, and their methods were mainly psychological, so far as I could discover. Only rarely did they give a powder or drug to the girl; usually they worked on her mind by various means (see Chapter 27).

General Notes on Marriage and Sex

As we have seen, it was by no means uncommon for the physical father of a child to be a quite different person from its legal father. This, to the Kikuyu way of thinking, was a great advantage. Any family was liable at some time or another to come under the influence of a curse, or some ceremonial uncleanness, which might have the effect of causing all members of that family to die. It was, however, believed that such curses could only affect the natural physical descendants of the man upon whom the curse fell, and that any of his legal offspring who were not his physical descendants would therefore escape, and keep the family name and estate alive.

The laws which governed marriage were so arranged as to prohibit not only marriage between actual legal relatives, but also marriage between people who might be related by blood through the custom of allowing male members of a man's age-group to have intercourse with his wives. Marriage to all full cousins, either on the mother's side or on the father's side, was strictly prohibited, and also to all second cousins on the paternal side. Second and third cousins on the mother's side were members of a different family, and might therefore be married. On the father's side, however, even third cousins might not marry unless the couple first went through a ceremony of *gũtuithanio* (to be separated and their relationship destroyed).

This ceremony of *gũtuithanio* was also essential if a man and a girl (p.816) who were initiated together in the same initiation lodge wished to marry each other. Without this ceremony they counted as brother and sister, since they both called the same woman "initiation mother" and since that woman had performed ceremonial sex acts for both of them together. If the ceremony were performed and such a man and woman married, no member of that man's initiation age-group could ever sleep with that woman.

The rule of exogamy did not apply at all to the major clans, but only to the sub-clans (*mbarĩ*). No man might marry a girl who belonged to the same sub-clan as himself, whether his membership in that sub-clan depended on a marriage of the patrilineal type or on a marriage of the matrilineal type.

Kikuyu methods of dealing with impotence and sterility are discussed in Chapter 21, "Sickness and its Treatment".

Purification of a Bride after Marriage

In the normal course of events, when a girl went to her husband she was ceremonially pure and needed no special purification by a medicine-man. If, however, she had had the misfortune to menstruate before initiation, or during initiation, and therefore had not had the ceremony of *kuoerũo* performed for her when she had her first menses (see Chapter 18), she had to be ceremonially purified in order to remove this condition of uncleanness.

This was done as follows. After the bride had been taken to her husband's home and the marriage had been consummated, the bride's father approached her husband and said, "*Mũirĩtu ũyũ nĩaahĩtanĩirũo*" (This girl had certain things which went wrong with her), and he requested that a ceremony be performed in order that any possible evil effects be removed. Should a father who

knew that he had never performed the ceremony of *kuoerũo* for his daughter allowed her to start her married life without revealing the fact to her husband, he laid himself open to an accusation of trying to harm his daughter. If anything went wrong with her after her marriage he could be blamed. Consequendy, he would always ask her husband to allow the following ceremony of purification to be performed.

First, the father produced a young ram or young ewe which was called *mbũri ya mũtĩ-inĩ* (an animal (for use) at the tree), and he handed (p.817) this over to the bridegroom. The latter called in a medicine-man, a few council elders, and one old woman past childbearing, and these people took the girl off into the bush with the ram or ewe, accompanied by the girl's father and her husband as witnesses. Either a *mũthakwa* or *mũkeũ* tree was chosen, and the bush and grass was cleared around it. Then the bride who was to be purified stood against the tree and held it with both her arms. The live animal was led round her and the tree twice, after which it was slaughtered and its stomach contents removed. These were handed to the medicine-man, who, accompanied by the bride, took them down to the nearest river. Here he proceeded to purify her by the ceremony of *gũtahĩkia* (a ceremonial purification rite). Meanwhile, the elders cut up the ram or ewe and removed its intestines, which they laid on one side with a piece of fat. The meat itself would be eaten later by those who had taken part in and witnessed the ceremony.

When the medicine-man and the girl came back from the ceremony of *gũtahĩkia*, the girl was again made to stand against the tree and hold it with both arms. Then the medicine-man and one elder wound the intestines of the sacrificial animal round both the girl and the tree, so binding them together, just as a daughter is bound to her mother at birth by the umbilical cord. The girl was in this way made the daughter of the tree instead of the daughter of her father and mother. The medicine-man then took a sharpened piece of *mũthakwa* wood and one of the elders took another. With these they cut the intestines, thereby symbolizing the act of cutting the umbilical cord at birth.

The girl then had castor oil (which the old woman had brought specially) poured into both her palms. She anointed the tree from the ground upwards as far as she could reach, saying at the same time, "*Wee, mũtĩ, tondũ ndagũtua maitũ na baba, na nĩ inyuĩ mwandeire, rĩu ndamũhoya maciaro; mũndathime*" (You, oh tree, since now I call you mother and father, and it was you who abandoned me, now I pray to you for children; give me your blessing). She repeated this act a second time with castor oil, after which she was given a lump of raw fat. She then rubbed the rest of the castor oil and fat on herself and her clothing and placed a little lump of fat at the foot of the tree. After this she had to go home without speaking a word to any person whom she might meet on the way. Having entered her own hut, she sat down on her stool for a few minutes in silence, after which she resumed her normal life. If after this she was barren, or her babies were still-born, or if she suffered any similar calamity, the blame could not be placed her father and mother.

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Post-marriage Gifts from the Bride's Family

After a Kikuyu marriage of any of the normal forms described above had been consummated, it was necessary for the bride's father to send presents to the bridegroom and bride. To the bridegroom he sent as many goats and sheep as there were complete units of 10 paid in marriage payments. These goats and sheep thus handed back were called *mbũri cia mathaga* (sheep for jewellery and ornaments), and they were supposed to be a payment to compensate the husband for the fact that from then on he was responsible for the ornaments and effects which his bride as a woman of married status would require.

These goats and sheep were always put to live in the hut of the bride where, with the *mbũri ya kahiũ* and the two or three animals which every father handed to his son on marriage, they formed the nucleus of a herd for the man and his wife. They and their progeny were earmarked for matters and expenses connected with the bride and her children, and could not properly be used for expenses and ceremonies connected with the hut and household of another wife, without the consent of the owner of the hut in which they were housed.

This arrangement meant that even if a man had used up all his stock in marriage payments, he was given back enough to be able to start building up a new herd for the benefit of the wife he had just married.

The present given to the bride by her father after the marriage had been consummated consisted of six big bags of bulrush millet. Three of these were sent to her to use when preparing gruel for her husband during the interval that would elapse before she had had time to grow this crop in her own fields given to her by her husband. The other three bags were kept by the bride's mother at her home, and used by her with her daughter to make special gruel which they would invite the husband and his special friends to come and consume.

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Chapter 20 – Kinship and Family Life

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Kinship

In order to understand the family life of the Kikuyu and to appreciate the reasons which lay behind the behaviour of the various members of a family to one another, it is essential first of all to study and understand the kinship system of the tribe. This can be best achieved by examining the terms of address and reference used by members of a family.

The first preliminary, therefore, is to give a table showing all those relatives and relations-in-law who in a Kikuyu family had special terms of reference and address, and then we shall have to analyse this table in order to find out why these various people were classified together.

Since the commonest form of Kikuyu family was organised on a patrilineal and patrilocal basis, we shall first study the position in relation to such a family. Then we shall briefly consider minor variations of kinship which were due to unusual marriages, such as the marriage of a woman by a woman, and the various forms of matrilineal marriage recognised by the Kikuyu.

In the following table the correct term of address and reference is given as used by both men and women. In a large proportion of cases the terms were the same for both, but in other cases the terms differed greatly. Although there may be a few omissions in this table, it has been made as complete as possible. Relatives or relations-in-law for whom there was no special term of address have been intentionally omitted.

In Kikuyu, terms for relatives differ according to whether they are used in the first, second or third person. Sometimes quite different words are used, and sometimes the difference is shown by a

suffix which is part of the word. Thus *baba* means my father, but your father (sing.) is *thoguo*, and his or her father is *ithe*. It is only in the plural that these persons are distinguished by a possessive adjective (*ithe witũ*, our father, *ithe wanyu*, your father (plural), and *ithe wao*, their father). *Taata* means (p.820) my aunt, *taataguo* your aunt (sing.) and *taatawe*, his or her aunt. For convenience, therefore, the words used in this chapter are those used by the first person singular, which are, of course, the normal ones for terms of address.

This chapter has been written in the past tense, as the whole book is about the Kikuyu people and their way of life prior to 1903, but it should be noted that the names used here are still the correct terms and are in daily use at the time of publication.

Table of Relationships

	Ego Male	Ego Female
My father	*Baba*	*Baba*
My father's elder full brothers.	*Baba* (*mũkũrũ*)	*Baba* (*mũkũrũ*)
My father's elder half-brothers.	*Baba* (*mũkũrũ*)	*Baba* (*mũkũrũ*)
My father's younger full brothers.	*Baba* (*mũnyinyi*)	*Baba* (*mũnyinyi*)
My father's younger half-brothers.	*Baba* (*mũnyinyi*)	*Baba* (*mũnyinyi*)
My father's full sisters	*Taata*	*Taata*
My father's half-sisters	*Taata*	*Taata*
My mother (my father's wife)	*Maitũ*	*Maitũ*
My father's wives senior to my mother	*Maitũ* (*mũkũrũ*)	*Maitũ* (*mũkũrũ*)
My father's wives junior to my mother	*Maitũ* (*mũnyinyi*)	*Maitũ* (*mũnyinyi*)
My father's elder full brother's wives senior to my mother	*Maitũ* (*mũkũrũ*)	*Maitũ* (*mũkũrũ*)
My father's elder half-brother's wives senior to my mother	*Maitũ* (*mũkũrũ*)	*Maitũ* (*mũkũrũ*)
My father's younger full brother's wives senior to my mother	*Maitũ* (*mũkũrũ*)	*Maitũ* (*mũkũrũ*)
My father's younger half-brother's wives senior to my mother	*Maitũ* (*mũkũrũ*)	*Maitũ* (*mũkũrũ*)
My father's elder full brother's wives junior to my mother	*Maitũ* (*mũnyinyi*)	*Maitũ* (*mũnyinyi*)
My father's elder half-brother's wives junior to my mother	*Maitũ* (*mũnyinyi*)	*Maitũ* (*mũnyinyi*)
My father's younger full brothers' wives junior to my mother.	*Maitũ* (*mũnyinyi*)	*Maitũ* (*mũnyinyi*)
My father's younger half-brother's wives junior to my mother	*Maitũ* (*mũnyinyi*)	*Maitũ* (*mũnyinyi*)
My father's full sister's husbands	*Mũthoni wakwa* or *Mũthoniwa*	*Mũthoni wakwa* or *Mũthoniwa*
My father's half-sisters' husbands.	*Mũthoni wakwa* or *Mũthoniwa*	*Mũthoni wakwa* or *Mũthoniwa*
My full brothers.	*Mũrũ wa maitũ*	*Mũrũ wa maitũ*
My half-brothers.	*Mũrũ wa baba*	*Mũrũ wa baba*
My full sisters.	*Mwarĩ wa maitũ*	*Mwarĩ wa maitũ*
My half-sisters.	*Mwarĩ wa baba*	*Mwarĩ wa baba*
My father's full brothers' sons.	*Mũrũ wa baba*	*Mũrũ wa baba* (p.821)
My father's half-brothers' sons.	*Mũrũ wa baba*	*Mũrũ wa baba*
My father's full brothers' daughters.	*Mwarĩ wa baba*	*Mwarĩ wa baba*
My father's half-brothers' daughters.	*Mwarĩ wa baba*	*Mwarĩ wa baba*
My father's full sisters' sons.	*Mũrũ wa aiya*	*Wa mũgendi*
My father's half-sisters' sons.	*Mũrũ wa aiya*	*Wa mũgendi*

My father's full sisters' daughters.	*Mwarĩ wa aiya*	*Wa mũgendi*
My father's half-sisters' daughters.	*Mwarĩ wa aiya*	*Wa mũgendi*
My mother's full brothers.	*Mama*	*Mama*
My mother's half-brothers.	*Mama*	*Mama*
My mother's father's full brothers' sons.	*Mama*	*Mama*
My mother's father's half-brothers' sons.	*Mama*	*Mama*
My mother's full sisters.	*Taata*	*Taata*
My mother's half-sisters.	*Taata*	*Taata*
My mother's full brothers' wives (except the wife of any mother's brother I am named after).	*Mũthoniwa or Maitũ*	*Maitũ*
My mother's half-brothers' wives (except the wife of any mother's brother I am named after)	*Mũthoniwa or Maitũ*	*Maitũ*
My mother's full brothers' wives (if I am named after him).	*Mũka wakwa*	—
My mother's half-brothers' wives (if I am named after him).	*Mũka wakwa*	—
My mother's full brothers' sons.	*Mũrũ wa aiya*	*Wa mũgendi*
My mother's half-brothers' sons.	*Mũrũ wa aiya*	*Wa mũgendi*
My mother's full brothers' daughters.	*Mũrũ wa aiya*	*Wa mũgendi*
My mother's half-brothers' daughters.	*Mũrũ wa aiya*	*Wa mũgendi*
My mother's full sisters' daughters.	*Mũrũ wa aiya*	*Wa mũgendi*
My mother's half-sisters' daughters.	*Mũrũ wa aiya*	*Wa mũgendi*
My father's father.	*Guka*	*Guka or Mũrũme wakwa*
My father's father's full brothers.	*Guka*	*Guka or Mũrũme wakwa*
My father's father's half-brothers.	*Guka*	*Guka or Mũrũme wakwa*
My mother's father's full brothers.	*Guka*	*Guka or Mũrũme wakwa*
My mother's father's half-brothers.	*Guka*	*Guka or Mũrũme wakwa*
My mother's father.	*Guka*	*Guka or Mũrũme wakwa*
My father's mother	*Cũcũ or Mũka wakwa*	*Cũcũ*
My father's mother's co-wives.	*Cũcũ or Mũka wakwa*	*Cũcũ or Mũiru*
My father's father's full brothers' wives.	*Cũcũ or Mũka wakwa*	*Cũcũ or Mũiru* (p.822)
My father's father's half-brothers' wives.	*Cũcũ or Mũka wakwa*	*Cũcũ or Mũiru*
My father's father's full sisters.	*Cũcũ*	*Cũcũ*
My father's father's half-sisters.	*Cũcũ*	*Cũcũ*
My father's father's male cousins who call him *mũrũ wa baba*, i.e. patrilineal cousins.	*Mũrũ wa baba*	*Mũrũme wakwa*
My father's father's male cousins who call him *mũrũ wa aiya*, i.e. his cousins who are not of his clan.	*Mũrũ wa aiya*	*Wa mũgendi*
My father's father's female cousins whom he calls *mwarĩ wa aiya*.	*Mwarĩ wa aiya*	*Wa mũgendi*
My father's father's female cousins whom he calls *mwarĩ wa baba*.	*Mwarĩ wa baba*	*Mwarĩ wa baba*
My mother's father's male cousins who call him *mũrũ wa baba*.	*Mũrũ wa baba*	*Mũrũme wakwa*
My mother's father's male cousins who call him *mũrũ wa aiya*.	*Mũrũ wa aiya*	*Wa mũgendi*
My mother's father's female cousins whom he calls *mwarĩ wa aiya*.	*Mwarĩ wa aiya*	*Wa mũgendi*
My mother's father's female cousins whom he calls *mwarĩ wa baba*.	*Mwarĩ wa baba*	*Mwarĩ wa baba*
My father's male grandparents and great-uncles whom he calls *guka*.	*Ũcũkũ*	*Ũcũkũ*
My father's female grandparents and great-aunts whom he calls *cũcũ*.	*Ũcũkũ*	*Ũcũkũ*

My mother's male grandparents and great-uncles whom she calls *guka*.	*Ūcũkũ*	*Ūcũkũ*
My mother's female grandparents and great-aunts whom she calk *cũcũ*.	*Ūcũkũ*	*Ūcũkũ*
My son's grandsons and great-nephews whom he calls *guka*.	*Ūcũkũ*	*Ūcũkũ*
My son's granddaughters and great-nieces whom he calls *mũkũ wakwa*.	*Ūcũkũ*	*Ūcũkũ*
My daughter's grandsons and great-nephews whom she calls *mũrũme wakwa*.	*Ūcũkũ*	*Ūcũkũ*
My daughter's granddaughters and great-nieces whom she calls *gacũcũ*.	*Ūcũkũ*	*Ūcũkũ*
My great-great paternal grand-father and his wives.	*Cũkũrũ*	*Cũkũrũ*
My great-great paternal grand-father's father's brothers, half-brothers, and their wives.	*Cũkũrũ*	*Cũkũrũ*
My wives.	*Mũka wakwa*	—
My sons	*Mũrũ wakwa or Mũriũ*	*Mwana wakwa*
My daughters	*Mwarĩ wakwa or Mwana wakwa*	*Mwana wakwa* (p.823)
My full sister's sons.	*Mũihwa*	*Mwana wa mwarĩ wa maitũ*
My half-sisters' sons.	*Mũihwa*	*Mwana wa mwarĩ wa baba*
My full sisters' daughters.	*Mũihwa*	*Mwana wa mwarĩ wa maitũ*
My half-sisters' daughters.	*Mũihwa*	*Mwana wa mwarĩ wa baba*
My father's full brother's daughters' sons.	*Mũihwa*	*Mwana wa mwarĩ wa baba*
My father's half-brothers' daughters' sons	*Mũihwa*	*Mwana wa mwarĩ wa baba*
My father's full brothers' daughters' daughters	*Mũihwa*	*Mwana wa mwarĩ wa baba*
My father's half-brothers' daughters' daughters	*Mũihwa*	*Mwana wa mwarĩ wa baba*
My full brothers' sons.	*Mũriũ or Mũrũ wakwa*	*Mwana wakwa*
My half-brothers' sons.	*Mũriũ or Mũrũ wakwa*	*Mwana wakwa*
My full brothers' daughters.	*Mwarĩ wakwa*	*Mwana wakwa*
My half-brothers' daughters.	*Mwarĩ wakwa*	*Mwana wakwa*
My father's father's full brothers' sons	*Baba* (*Mũkũrũ or Mũnyinyi*)	*Baba* (*Mũkũrũ or Mũnyinyi*)
My father's father's half-brothers' sons	*Baba* (*Mũkũrũ or Mũnyinyi*)	*Baba* (*Mũkũrũ or Mũnyinyi*)
My father's father's full brothers' daughters	*Taata*	*Taata*
My father's father's half-brothers' daughters	*Taata*	*Taata*
My father's full brothers' sons' sons	*Mũriũ or Mũrũ wakwa*	*Mwana wa mũrũ wa baba*
My father's half-brothers' sons' sons	*Mũriũ or Mũrũ wakwa*	*Mwana wa mũrũ wa baba*
My father's full brothers' sons' daughters	*Mwarĩ wakwa*	*Mwana wa mũrũ wa baba*
My father's half-brothers' sons' daughters	*Mwarĩ wakwa*	*Mwana wa mũrũ wa baba*
My mother's father's full brothers' daughters	*Taata*	*Taata*

My mother's father's half-brothers' daughters	*Taata*	*Taata*
My sons' sons.	*Guka*	*Mũrũme wakwa*
My sons' daughters.	*Mũka wakwa*	*Gacũcũ*
My daughters' sons.	*Guka*	*Mũrũme wakwa*
My daughters' daughters.	*Mũka wakwa*	*Gacũcũ*
My full brothers' sons' sons.	*Guka*	*Gacũcũ*
My full brothers' sons' daughters.	*Mũka wakwa*	*Gacũcũ* (p. 824)
My half-brothers' sons' sons.	*Guka*	*Gacũcũ*
My half-brothers' sons' daughters.	*Mũka wakwa*	*Gacũcũ*
My full brothers' daughters' sons	*Guka*	*Gacũcũ*
My half-brothers' daughters' sons.	*Guka*	*Gacũcũ*
My full brothers' daughters' daughters.	*Mũka wakwa*	*Gacũcũ*
My half-brothers' daughters' daughters.	*Mũka wakwa*	*Gacũcũ*
My husband's other wives' sons' sons.	—	*Gacũcũ*
My husband's other wives' sons' daughters.	—	*Gacũcũ*
My husband's other wives' daughters' sons.	—	*Mũrũme wakwa*
My husband's other wives' daughters' daughters.	—	*Gacũcũ*
My husband's full brothers' wives' sons sons.	—	*Mũrũme wakwa or Wa kanyanya*
My husband's half-brothers' wives' sons sons.	—	*Mũrũme wakwa or Wa kanyanya*
My husband's full brothers' wives' sons daughters.	—	*Gacũcũ*
My husband's half-brothers' wives' daughters' sons.	—	*Gacũcũ*
My husband's full brothers' wives daughters' sons.	—	*Mũrũme wakwa or Wa kanyanya*
My husband's half-brothers' wives' daughters' sons.	—	*Mũrũme wakwa or Wa kanyanya*
My husband's full brothers' wives' daughters' daughters.	—	*Gacũcũ*
My husband's half-brothers' wives' daughters' daughters.	—	*Gacũcũ*
My full sisters' sons' sons.	*Guka*	*Gacũcũ*
My full sisters' sons' daughters.	*Gacũcũ*	*Gacũcũ*
My half-sisters' sons' sons.	*Guka*	*Gacũcũ*
My half-sisters' sons' daughters.	*Gacũcũ*	*Gacũcũ*
My full sisters' daughters' sons.	*Guka*	*Gacũcũ*
My full sisters' daughters' daughters.	*Gacũcũ*	*Gacũcũ*
My half-sisters' daughters' daughters.	*Gacũcũ*	*Gacũcũ*
My half-sisters' daughters' sons.	*Guka*	*Gacũcũ*
My mother's full brothers' sons' sons.	*Mũriũ or Mũrũ wakwa*	*Mwana wa mũrũ wa maitũ*
My mother's full brothers' sons' daughters.	*Mwarĩ wakwa*	*Mwana wa mũrũ wa maitũ*
My mother's half-brothers' sons' sons.	*Mũriũ or Mũrũ wakwa*	*Mwana wa mũrũ wa maitũ*
My mother's half-brothers' sons' daughters.	*Mwarĩ wakwa*	*Mwana wa mũrũ wa maitũ* (p.825)
My mother's full brothers' daughters' sons.	*Mwana wakwa*	*Mwana wa mũirĩtu wa mama*
My mother's half-brothers' daughters' sons.	*Mwana wakwa*	*Mwana wa mũirĩtu wa mama*
My mother's full brothers' daughters' daughters.	*Mwana wakwa*	*Mwana wa mũirĩtu wa mama*

My mother's half-brothers' daughters' daughters.	*Mwana wakwa*	*Mwana wa mũirĩtu wa mama*
My mother's full sisters' sons' sons	*Mwana wakwa or Mwana wa mũrũ wa aiya*	*Mwana wa wa mũgendi*
My mother's half-sisters' sons' sons.	*Mwana wakwa or Mwana wa mũrũ wa aiya*	*Mwana wa wa mũgendi*
My mother's full sisters' sons' daughters.	*Mwana wakwa or Mwana wa mũrũ wa aiya*	*Mwana wa wa mũgendi*
My mother's half-sisters' sons' daughters.	*Mwana wakwa or Mwana wa mũrũ wa aiya*	*Mwana wa wa mũgendi*
My mother's full sisters' and half-sisters' daughters' sons and daughters.	*There was no special term of address for these people but they were referred to as Andũ a rũrĩra*	
My father's full sisters' sons' sons.	*Mwana wakwa*	*Mwana wa mũrũ wa aiya*
My father's half-sisters' sons' sons.	*Mwana wakwa*	*Mwana wa mũrũ wa aiya*
My father's full sisters' sons' daughters	*Mwana wakwa*	*Mwana wa mũrũ wa aiya*
My father's half-sisters' sons' daughters.	*Mwana wakwa*	*Mwana wa mũrũ wa aiya*
My father's full and half-sisters' daughters' sons and daughters.	*There was no special term of address for these people but they were referred to as Andũ a rũrĩra*	
My mother's full brothers' sons' wives.	*Mũka wakwa*	—
My mother's half-brothers' sons' wives.	*Mũka wakwa*	— (p.826)
My husband's mother's full brothers' sons' wives.	—	*Kairu*
My husband's mother's half-brothers' sons' wives.	—	*Kairu*
My wives' full sisters.	*Maramũ*	—
My wives' half-sisters.	*Maramũ*	—
My wives' full brothers.	*Mũrũ wa aiya*	—
My wives' half-brothers.	*Mũrũ wa aiya*	—
My wives' fathers.	*Mũthoni wakwa Mũthoniwa*	—
My wives' fathers' full brothers.	*Mũthoniwa*	—
My wives' fathers' half-brothers	*Mũthoniwa*	—
My wives' full brothers' wives.	*Mũka wakwa*	—
My wives' half-brothers' wives.	*Maitũ or Mũthoni wakwa*	—
My wives' fathers' wives.	*Maitũ or Mũthoni wakwa*	—
My wives' fathers' full brothers' wives.	*Maitũ or Mũthoni wakwa*	—
My wives' fathers' half-brothers' wives.	*Maitũ or Mũthoni wakwa*	—
My full sisters' husbands.	*Mũrũ wa aiya*	*Maramũ*
My half-sisters' husbands.	*Mũrũ wa aiya*	*Maramũ*
My husband.	—	*Mũrũme wakwa*
My husband's full brothers.	—	*Mũrũme wakwa*
My husband's half-brothers.	—	*Mũrũme wakwa*
My husband's father.	—	*Baba*
My husband's mother.	—	*Maitũ*
My husband's father's full brothers.	—	*Mũthoniwa or Baba*
My husband's father's half-brothers.	—	*Mũthoniwa or Baba*
My husband's father's full brothers' wives.	—	*Maitũ or Mũthoniwa*
My husband's father's half-brothers' wives.	—	*Maitũ or Mũthoniwa*
My husband's other wives.	—	*Mũiru*
My husband's full brothers' wives.	—	*Mũiru*
My husband's half-brothers' wives.	—	*Mũiru*
My husband's father's wives (other than my mother).	—	*Maitũ*
My wives' full sisters' husbands.	*Mũnyanya wa mũka*	—
My wives' half-sisters' husbands.	*Mũnyanya wa mũka*	—

My full brothers' wives.	*Mũka wakwa*	—
My half-brothers' wives.	*Mũka wakwa*	—
My father's full brothers' sons' wives.	*Mũka wakwa*	— (p.827)
My father's half-brothers' sons' wives.	*Mũka wakwa*	—
My husband's mother's father's wives.	—	*Ūcũkũ*
My husband's *ũcũkũ*.	—	*Kairu*
My mother's full sisters' sons.	*Mũrũ wa aiya*	*Wa mũgendi*
My mother's half-sisters' sons.	*Mũrũ wa aiya*	*Wa mũgendi*
My father's father's wives' full sisters.	*Maramũ*	—
My mother's father's wives' full sisters.	*Maramũ*	—
My father's father's wives' half-sisters.	*Maramũ*	—
My mother's father's wives' half-sisters.	*Maramũ*	—
My sons' daughters' husbands.	*Mũnyanya wa mũka*	*Wa kanyanya*
My daughters' daughters' husbands.	*Mũnyanya wa mũka*	*Wa kanyanya*
My husband's full sisters.	—	*Mwarĩ wa maitũ*
My husband's half-sisters.	—	*Mwana wa baba*
My husband's full sisters' husbands.	—	*Mũrũ wa maitũ*
My husband's half-sisters' husbands.	—	*Mũrũ wa baba*
My father's father's full brothers' sons' sons.	*Mũrũ wa baba*	*Mũrũ wa baba*
My father's father's half-brothers' sons' sons.	*Mũrũ wa baba*	*Mũrũ wa baba*
My father's father's full brothers' sons' daughters.	*Mwarĩ wa baba*	*Mwarĩ wa baba*
My father's father's half-brothers' sons' daughters.	*Mwarĩ wa baba*	*Mwarĩ wa baba*
My father's father's full brothers' daughters' sons.	*Mũrũ wa aiya*	*Wa mũgendi*
My father's father's half-brothers' daughters' sons.	*Mũrũ wa aiya*	*Wa mũgendi*
My sons' wives.	*Maitũ*	*Maitũ*
My daughters' husbands.	*Baba*	*Baba*
My husband's half-sisters' sons' sons.	—	*Wa kanyanya*
My husband's half-sisters' sons' sons.	—	*Wa kanyanya*
My husband's full sisters' daughters' sons.	—	*Wa kanyanya*
My husband's half-sisters' daughters' sons.	—	*Wa kanyanya*
All whom my husband calls *baba*.	—	*Baba*
All whom my husband calls *taata*.	—	*Taata or Maitũ*
My mother's father's father's full brothers' sons' sons.	*Mama wa kĩahũ-inĩ*	*Mama wa kĩahũ-inĩ*
My mother's father's father's half- brothers' sons' sons.	*Mama wa kĩahũ-inĩ*	*Mama wa kĩahũ-inĩ*
My father's father's full brothers' sons' daughters' sons.	*Mũihwa wa kĩahũ-inĩ*	—
My father's father's full brothers' sons' daughters' daughters.	*Mama wa kĩahũ-inĩ*	— (p.828)
My father's father's half-brothers' sons' daughters' sons.	*Mũihwa wa kĩahũ*	—
My father's father's half-brothers' sons' daughters' daughters.	*Mũihwa wa kĩahũ*	—
My father's father's full brothers' sons' wives	*Maitũ*	*Maitũ*
My father's father's half-brothers' sons' wives	*Maitũ*	*Maitũ*
My mother's full sisters' husbands.	*Mũthoni wakwa or Mũthoniwa*	*Mũthoni wakwa or Mũthoniwa*
My mother's half-sisters' husbands	*Mũthoni wakwa or Mũthoniwa*	*Mũthoni wakwa or Mũthoniwa*
My father's father's full brothers' daughters' daughters.	*Mwarĩ wa aiya*	*Wa mũgendi*
My father's father's half-brothers' daughters.	*Mwarĩ wa aiya*	*Wa mũgendi*
My father's father's full brothers' sons' sons' wives.	*Mũka wakwa*	—
My father's father's half-brothers' sons' sons' wives.	*Mũka wakwa*	—
My full brothers' daughters' daughters.	*Mũka wakwa*	*Gacũcũ*
My half-brothers' daughters' daughters.	*Mũka wakwa*	*Gacũcũ*
My mother's mother.	*Cũcũ or Mũka wakwa*	*Cũcũ*

My mother's mother's co-wives.	*Cũcũ or Mũka wakwa*	*Cũcũ*
My husband's father's father's full brothers' sons' sons.	—	*Mũrũme wakwa*
My husband's father's father's half-brothers' sons' sons.	—	*Mũrũme wakwa*
My husband's father's full brothers' sons.	—	*Mũrũme wakwa*
My husband's father's half-brothers' sons	—	*Mũrũme wakwa*
My mother's father's full brothers' wives	*Cũcũ*	*Cũcũ*
My mother's father's half-brothers' wives	*Cũcũ*	*Cũcũ*
My mother's father's full sisters.	*Cũcũ*	*Cũcũ*
My mother's father's half-sisters.	*Cũcũ*	*Cũcũ*
My husband's mother's father's full brothers' wives.	—	*Kairu*
My husband's mother's father's half-brothers' wives.	—	*Kairu* (p.829)
My sons' sons' wives.	—	*Kairu*
My co-wives' sons' sons' wives.	—	*Kairu*
My co-wives' daughters' sons' wives.	—	*Kairu*
My daughters' sons' wives.	—	*Kairu*
My husband's full brothers' sons' daughters	—	*Kairu*
My husband's half-brothers' sons' daughters.	—	*Kairu*
My husband's full brothers' daughters' daughters.	—	*Kairu*
My husband's half-brothers' daughters' daughters.	—	*Kairu*
My father's father's full brothers' sons' sons' sons.	*Mũriũ or Mũrũ wakwa*	*Mwana wakwa_or Mũrũ wa baba*
My father's father's half-brothers' sons' sons' sons.	*Mũriũ or Mũrũ wakwa*	*Mwana wakwa_or Mũrũ wa baba*
My father's father's full brothers' sons' sons' daughters.	*Mwarĩ wakwa*	*Mwana wakwa or Mwarĩ wakwa*
My father's father's half-brothers' sons' sons' daughters.	*Mwarĩ wakwa*	*Mwana wakwa or Mwarĩ wakwa*
All those whom my husband calls *mũrũ wakwa*.	—	*Mwana wakwa*
All those whom my husband calls *mwarĩ wakwa*.	—	*Mwana wakwa*
All those whom my husband calls *mũihwa*.	—	*Mwana wakwa*
All those whom my husband calls *mwana wakwa*.	—	*Mwana wakwa*
My full sisters' husbands' sons' sons.	—	*Maramũ*
My half-sisters' husbands' sons' sons.	—	*Maramũ*
My full sisters' husbands' daughters' sons	—	*Maramũ*
My half-sisters' husbands' daughters' sons	—	*Maramũ*
My husband's father's father's wives.	—	*Mũiru*
My husband's father's father's brothers' wives.	—	*Mũiru*
My husband's father's father's half-brothers' wives.	—	*Mũiru*
My husband's father's full brothers' sons' wives.	—	*Mũiru*
My husband's father's half-brothers' sons' wives.	—	*Mũiru* (p.830)

The terms of address explained in this chapter—which were also in most cases descriptive terms of reference—were used for a great many different individuals. We must now examine the different headings under which relatives and relations-in-law were classified, so as to find out why different relatives were grouped together. In the table, 40 different classifications are shown, and the most convenient way will be to take each of these in turn and explain why such people were grouped together.

We shall find that a proportion of the terms were reciprocal, while others were not. For example, all those whom a female addressed as *kairu* used the term *kairu* for her also, whereas those whom a man called *mama* called him *mũihwa*.

Terms of Reference and Address

Baba

In its strictest sense *baba* means my father, in the legal but not necessarily the physical sense, but it was extended to a great many other people who were fathers in the classificatory sense.

For a man and a woman, all brothers, half-brothers, and male patrilineal cousins of his or her father who were of the same generation as that persons's father were ranked as classificatory fathers. They had all contributed to the marriage payments for that person's mother, and so had the right to address her as *mũka wakwa* (my wife). She, of course, had only one husband, but on his death one of them would be responsible for looking after her if she had no son old enough to do so, and would act as father to her children.

Classificatory fathers were, strictly speaking, called *baba mũkũrũ* (my senior father) or *baba mũnyinyi* (my junior father) according to whether they were older or younger than that person's own father.

In addition to these, a woman called *baba* all those people whom her husband called *baba*, because she and her husband were one. She also addressed as *baba* all her daughters' husbands, as they were the actual or potential fathers of grandsons who would be named after her husband, and whom she would address as *mũrũme wakwa* (my husband), because they had inherited her husband's name and personality.

p.831
Maitũ

In its strictest sense *maitũ* means my mother, but it was extended, under the classificatory system, to embrace the wives of all of a person's classificatory fathers as well, that is, the other wives of that person's own father, the wives of his or her father's and mother's full and half- brothers, and the wives of his or her paternal grandfather and grandfather's full and half-brothers.

A man also called his sons' wives, and the wives of his wives' fathers, and of their full and half-brothers, *maitũ*, though these could alternatively be addressed by him as *mũthoni wakwa* (my relation-in-law).

A woman used the term *maitũ* for all those her husband called *maitũ*, as well as those who were *maitũ* to herself, because by marriage she had become one with him.

It should be noted here that the term *maitũ* as applied to the co-wife of a person's mother, or the wives of his or her father's brothers and patrilineal cousins, was, strictly, qualified by the use of the words *mũkũrũ* and *mũnyinyi* (senior and junior) according to whether they were married before or after that person's own mother.

It is not at all difficult to understand why a person called the wives of his or her father's brothers, half-brothers, and patrilineal male cousins *maitũ*, since they were the wives of men whom he or she called *baba* (father). As such they were equivalent to the wives of his or her own father, who called them all *mũka wakwa* (my wife), because he was a male member of the family that had helped to acquire these wives by marriage payments, and as such he was a potential inheritor of any one of them if their husbands died.

Thus, it is also easy to see why a father's brother's wives should be called my mother, but it is not so easy at first sight to understand why a mother's brothers' wives should also be called my mother. The explanation is, however, to be found if we consider two fundamental Kikuyu concepts about relationship. The first of these was that a man and his sisters and half-sisters were really one and

the same person except that they differed in sex. As the Kikuyu said, "*Nĩ ta mũndũ ũmwe*" (They-are as one person). The other concept was that a woman was part of her husband, being merely a female part of him. Therefore, fundamentally, a person's mother and mother's brothers were one person, her brothers being male mothers to her children. In addition, the wives of these brothers, being one with their husbands, were called *maitũ* (my mother), except in the case of a man who had been named after his mother's brother, in which case he would call her *mũka wakwa* (my wife).

p.832
Mũrũ wa Maitũ

The term *mũrũ wa maitũ* means literally, my mother's son, that is, my uterine brother. The sons of classificatory mothers were never addressed by this term, except that a woman addressed her husband's uterine brothers as *mũrũ wa maitũ* because she and her husband were "one person". A man did not call his wives' uterine brothers *mũrũ wa maitũ*, because, by marriage, it was the woman who had become a part of the man and not vice versa, and she now belonged to his clan.

The only classificatory brothers to be addressed thus were a woman's husbands' full sisters' husbands. This was explained as follows by the Kikuyu. As a woman and her husband were one, she and her husband's full or uterine sisters were like uterine sisters to each other. On the other hand, her husband's sisters and their respective husbands were also one. In theory, therefore, since a woman and her husband's sisters were as sisters, their husbands should have been called *maramu* by her since that was the term for her own sisters' and half-sisters' husbands. This was not possible, however, because *maramu*. had a limited and special meaning. Therefore, since she could not call them *maramu*, and since she = her husband = his sisters = their husbands, it was easiest to classify her husband's sisters' husbands as her uterine brothers!

Mwarĩ wa Maitũ

This term means literally, daughter of my mother, and in its strictest meaning it was applied only to one's uterine sisters. It had no classificatory extension, except that a woman after she had married sometimes called her husband's sisters *mwari wa maitũ*, though more often she called them simply *wa maitũ* or even *maitũ*.

Mũrũ wa Baba

The term *mũrũ wa baba* means literally, son of my father, and in its strictest meaning was applied only to half-brothers, that is to say, the sons of a person's father by wives other than his or her own mother. In its classificatory sense, however, this term was extended to all males of that person's own generation and family who had the same paternal grandfather or great-grandfather, and who traced their descent through a male line so that they were of the same clan.

p.833
In all of the above senses it was usually used equally by males and of males, and in addition to this a male called by this term all those whom his paternal and maternal grandfathers called by the same term, while a female called her husband's half-sisters' husbands *mũrũ wa baba*. She did not, however, call her husband's classificatory half-brothers by this term, but as we shall see, addressed them as *mũrũme wakwa* (my husband). A man could also call his grandfather *mũrũ wa baba*.

A. woman called her husband's half-sisters' husbands *mũrũ wa baba* for the same reason that she called her husbands' full sisters' husbands *mũrũ wa maitũ*, as described above. She could not call them *maramu*, as that had a limited use, so *mũrũ wa baba* was the next best classificatory address.

Mwarĩ wa Baba

This term means literally, daughter of my father, and in its most strict sense it was applied to half-sisters, that is to say, sisters who had the same legal father but a different legal mother. The term was extended considerably in the classificatory sense, and applied to all those females of a person's own generation who could trace their descent through a male line back to his or her paternal grandfather.

It was, in fact, used for the female counterpart of those called *mũrũ wa baba*. It was also similarly extended to all those cousins of a person's paternal and maternal grandfathers whom they called *mwarĩ wa baba*, and in this case the term was used equally by males and females. There was no female counterpart, however, to the use of *mũrũ wa baba* by a man for his grandfather.

Mũrũme Wakwa

The term *mũrũme wakwa* means my husband or my man, and in its strictest sense was applied by a woman to her own husband. In the classificatory sense it had a considerable extension, and one would expect that all those who were called *mũka wakwa* by a male would address him as *mũrũme wakwa*. This was not, however, the case, as some of those whom he addressed as "my wife" addressed him back not as my husband, but as my brother, as for example his wives' brothers' wives.

The following is a full list of those whom a female addressed as *mũrũme wakwa:* her own husband and her husband's full and half-brothers, (p.834) her husband's father's full and half-brothers' sons, and her husband's father's father's full and half-brothers' sons' sons. Also the sons of her own sons and daughters, the sons of her co-wives' sons and daughters and her husband's full and half-brothers' sons' sons and daughters' sons. A woman sometimes also used the term *mũrũme wakwa* (my husband) as an alternative to *guka* (my grandfather), and thus she called *mũrũme wakwa* all those patrilineal cousins of her father's and mother's fathers whom they called *mũrũ wa baba*.

A woman, therefore, had people whom she called "my husband" in three generations; her own, that of her grandparents, and that of her grandchildren. Those in her grandparents' generation she called so because she was equal to her grandmothers, whose classificatory husbands were therefore her classificatory husbands as well. In her own generation she called her husband's full brothers my husband, and those whom her husband called son of my father, even though they were only distant cousins. They were all men who might potentially interest her should her husband die, and they all called her my wife. In her grandchildren's generation she addressed as "my husband" those males who were the reincarnation of the men she called by that name in her own generation.

Mũka Wakwa

The term *mũka wakwa* means, in the strictest sense, my woman or my wife. Its simplest usage was for a man's own legal wives. The term had, however, a classificatory application, being used as a term of address towards a large number of females who were not a man's wives at all, but who were potential wives, or theoretical wives. It was also used by a man towards the wives of all the members of his own initiation age-group, but with this aspect of the term we are not concerned here, as we are dealing only with the family system at the moment.

The following is the full list of those relatives and relations-in-law whom a man would have correctly addressed as *mũka wakwa:* his own wives, the daughters of his own sons and daughters and of his full and half-brothers' sons and daughters, the wives of his wives' full and half- brothers,

his own full and half-brothers' wives and their sons' wives, the wives of his father's full and half-brothers' sons, and his father's full and half-brothers' sons' sons.

In addition, a man called his father's mother and her co-wives, and his father's father's full and half-brothers' wives *mũka wakwa* as an alternative to calling them *cũcũ*. Also, when a man had been named (p.835) after a maternal uncle, he called that uncle's wives *mũka wakwa*. A man, therefore, called people of three different generations my wife, and we will examine these in their order of seniority to find out the reasons for such a curious classification.

In the first place, a man addressed as *mũka wakwa* his paternal grandmother and her co-wives, and his paternal grandfather's brothers' and half-brothers' wives, as an alternative to *cũcũ* (grandmother). This was by virtue of the fact that a man and his paternal grandfather were one and the same person. He could therefore call his grandfather's wives and nearer classificatory wives my wife. He also called his maternal grandmother and her co-wives my wife, but he did not call his maternal grandfather's brothers' and half-brothers' wives thus, since they were not particularly related to him.

In his own generation a man addressed as my wife all the wives of his brothers, half-brothers, and patrilineal cousins who could trace patrilineal descent from his great-grandfather. In other words, the wives of all those whom he called *mũrũ wa baba*. All of them had potentially contributed to the marriage payment of each other's wives, so all their wives were, theoretically, jointly the wives of the males of that generation in the family. This was true only in theory, however, for no man might have intercourse with his classificatory wives during their husbands' lifetime, not even of the husband was a member of his own age-group. In addition to this, he called the wives of his mother's brothers' and half-brothers' sons my wife. These uncles, whom he called *mama*, were the only people who were not members of his own clan whom he could call upon to help him when he wanted to marry. In fact, his mother's brother, being a kind of male mother to him, was the holder of property which he ordinarily used in obtaining wives for his own sons. Since a man had a kind of special right over anything belonging to such an uncle, this right was extended in theory to those wives whom such an uncle acquired for his own sons. A man, therefore, called his mother's brothers' sons' wives and his mother's half-brothers' sons' wives my wife. Finally, in a man's own generation he addressed as *mũka wakwa* all the wives of his wives' brothers and half-brothers, because his wives' brothers and half-brothers were one with his wives, and their wives were one with their husbands.

In the generation of his grandchildren, a man addressed as *mũka wakwa* all his own granddaughters, and the granddaughters of his brothers and half-brothers, because in that generation there were girls named after his wives, or women who were his classificatory wives, and who reincarnated them.

p.836
Mũiru

This term means "co-wife", and it was used primarily in reference to a woman's husband's other wives, and very, very rarely as a term of address, because most of those who were *mũiru* were addressed by name.

The term *mũiru* was extended in the classificatory sense to the following: a woman's husband's full and half-brothers' wives, her husband's father's full and half-brothers' sons' wives, her

husband's father's father's wives, and those wives of her husband's fathers' father's full and half-brothers.

In other words, it was used for some of the women who were called "my wife" by a woman's husband, but only for those who had married into his clan, or who were married to men intimately related to him or to his paternal grandfather. The wives of distant male cousins who belonged to his clan were also called *mũka wakwa* by a male, but his wife did not call them *mũiru*, as they were too distantly related and seldom met.

A woman, therefore, used the term *mũiru* for women of two generations: those who were wives of men of her husband's clan and his close relatives through a male line, and those who were the wives of people whom she called *guka*, but again only on the patrilineal side.

Kairu

This term is a diminutive of the term *mũiru* (co-wife), and it was used by a woman for certain of the people who were classificatory wives of her husband.

They fell into four categories. In the first place, the wives of her husband's mother's father and her husband's mother's father's brothers and half-brothers were *kairu*. Her husband called these women my wife by virtue of the fact that he and his mother's father and mother's brothers and half-brothers were one and the same person, so that their wives were his wives. She could not call them *mũiru*, however, because they all belonged by marriage to the clan which her husband's mother came from, and not to her own clan, and they were only in a remote sense co-wives. They were different from her husband's father's father's wives and his father's father's brothers' and half-brothers' wives, who belonged by marriage to her husband's own clan and so were *mũiru* (full co-wives) to her.

p.837
A second group were the wives of her husband's mother's brothers' sons, and her husband's mother's half-brothers' sons. Her husband called them *mũka wakwa* in a classificatory sense, but they belonged by marriage to his mother's clan and not to his. Therefore they were only *kairu* to his wives, and not *mũiru*, which is what she called her husband's father's brothers' sons' wives.

The third category were the wives of her sons' sons, her daughters' sons, and her co-wives' sons' and daughters' sons. All of these people were called *kairu* because they were the wives of young men who called her husband *guka*, and so were one and the same person as her husband. They were therefore equal to the wives of her husband, and as such were her co-wives. We might expect to find them called *mũiru*, but, because they were so very junior they were called *kairu*, just as she called her grand-daughters *gacũcũ* or little grandmother instead of *cũcũ*. To her they were my little co-wives.

The fourth category of people she called *kairu* were the daughters of her husband's brothers' and half-brothers' sons and daughters, who were called *mũka wakwa* by her husband, since they were married into his clan and he had helped to make the marriage payments for them. They also were *kairu* to her, or little co-wives.

Guka

The term *guka* means my grandfather, and in its strictest sense was used for the father of a person's father or mother, but in its classificatory sense it was extended to many other people. Men and women also used the term *guka* for their own maternal and paternal grandfathers' full and half-

brothers. A man also used it for the sons of his own sons and daughters, for those of his full and half-brothers' sons and daughters, and the sons of his full and half-sisters' sons and daughters.

A male called his grandfather and his grandfather's brothers and half-brothers *guka* because they were in the direct relationship of grandfather or granduncle to him, but the reason why he should call his grandnephews' and grandnieces' sons my grandfather is not so immediately obvious. It was because men took the names of their grandfathers and his brothers, and reincarnated them, so keeping the family alive. So a man who had his grandfather's name, and reincarnated him, passed that name on to a grandson, who in his turn would be his reincarnation. Therefore, it was quite reasonable for a (p.838) man to address his own grandson as my grandfather, and also his great-nephews.

Cũcũ

The term *cũcũ* means, strictly, my grandmother, and in its commonest usage it was applied by males and females alike to their real grandmothers, both maternal and paternal. In a classificatory sense, however, it was also used for one's grandmothers' co-wives, and for the wives and sisters of one's grandfathers' brothers and sisters. A person's grandmothers' sisters had been married into a variety of families and had no special name, and one's grandmothers' brothers' wives were too distantly related to have a special name, though when met they were probably addressed as *cũcũ*.

Cũcũ was not used for granddaughters and grandnieces, as *guka* was for grandsons, its place being taken by *gacũcũ*.

Ũcũkũ

The term *ũcũkũ* was used by both males and females to denote people of either sex who were great-grandparents or great-grandchildren, and it was extended under the classificatory system to all those who were classificatory grandparents of a persons's mother and father, and the classificatory grandchildren of that person's sons and daughters. A woman also called *ũcũkũ* all those who were her husband's *ũcũkũ*. Had they been encountered, however, a great many others would have ranked as *ũcũkũ* too, since in theory all those relations who were of the same generation as a person's great-grandparents and great-grandchildren were also counted as his or her *ũcũkũ*.

Cũkũrũ

This term was used more as a term of reference than as a term of address, meaning, great-great-grandparents and members of their generation on the paternal side. Great-great-grandparents and classificatory great-great-grandparents on the maternal side did not strictly rank as *cũkũrũ*. In Kikuyu family life *cũkũrũ* played no important part. It was extremely rare for any man to live to be a *cũkũrũ* even in the classificatory sense.

p.839

Mũrũ Wakwa or Mũriũ

As terms of address, *mũrũ wakwa* and *mũriũ* were not used by women, but women sometimes used *mũrũ wakwa* as a term of reference. (*Mũriũ* was never used as a term of reference to mean my son, as when used in that way it means his son—see glossary). A woman used *mwana wakwa* (my child) when she addressed one of her sons. A man addressed as *mũrũ wakwa* or *mũriũ* his own and his full and half-brother's sons, the sons of his father's and mother's full and half-brothers' sons, and his father's father's full and half-brothers' sons' sons' sons.

In a polygamous family, therefore, even if no man had more than two wives, and no woman more than three sons, the number of people whom a man called my son was very great indeed. Moreover, all of them were of the same generation as his own actual sons. All of them, too, with the exception of the sons of his mother's brothers' and half-brothers' sons, were the sons of people whom he addressed as my brother. That is to say, they were the sons of actual patrilineal brothers and half-brothers, and of patrilineal cousins and second cousins. The exceptions are the only ones that need explanation.

The sons of his mother's brothers' and half-brothers' sons were called my son by him because their grandfathers were in the position of *mama* (male mothers) to him, and one of them would have been *in loco parentis* to him if his mother had made a matrilineal marriage. They were like fathers to him, and their sons were like brothers. The sons of these brothers therefore, he addressed as my sons. (The wives of his maternal uncles' sons were among the few female relations-in-law whom he called, my wife, even though they did not belong to his own clan.)

Mwarĩ Wakwa or Mwana Wakwa **(***As used by Men*)

The term *mwana wakwa* (my child) was used by a man as an alternative to *mwarĩ wakwa* (my daughter) for his own daughters and all those whose brothers he called *mũrũ wakwa*. He also used *mwana wakwa* for those people of his children's generation who did not belong to his own clan and family, since their mothers had married into a different clan, yet who were closely related, being his nephews and nieces in a matrilineal line. These were the sons and daughters of his mother's full and half-brothers' daughters, the sons and daughters of his mother's full and half-sisters' sons, and the sons and daughters of his father's full and (p.840) half-sisters' sons. The sons and daughters of his mother's full and half-sisters' sons were alternatively addressed by him as *mwana wa mũrũ wa aiya*.

Mwana Wakwa (*As used by Women*)

The term *mwana wakwa*, which means my child, was used by a woman in a comparatively restricted sense, and not applied to most of those whom a male addressed as *mwana wakwa*. In its strictest use a woman addressed and referred to her own sons and daughters as *mwana wakwa* and, as long as they were unmarried, her co-wives' sons and daughters. In addition, a woman addressed by this term her full and half-brothers' sons and daughters. After any of the males in the above list had married and set up their own homes, they were still addressed as *mwana wakwa*, but they were referred to even by a woman as *mũriũ* (in the case of her own sons), as *mũrũ wa mũiru wakwa*, or "son of my co-wife" (in the case of co-wives' sons), or *mũrũ wakwa* (in the case of her own brothers' and half-brothers' sons).

So we find that in addition to her own children and her co-wives' children, a woman addressed as *mwana wakwa* only those children who were of her original clan, that is, the clan she came from before she married. She did not address as *mwana wakwa* her patrilineal cousins' children, but called them by such terms as *mwana wa mũgendi* and *mwana wa mũrũ wa aiya*. A woman did, however, address as *mwana wakwa* those of her husband's classificatory children whom he called *mũrũ wakwa, mwana wakwa, mwarĩ wakwa*, and *mũihwa*.

Gacũcũ

This term, which means little grandmother, was used chiefly by women as a term of address to their own grandchildren, both male and female, although male grandchildren were also sometimes called either *mũrũme wakwa* (my husband) or *wa kanyanya* (my little lover) as an alternative to

gacũcũ. The term was also used by both men and women for certain classificatory grandchildren, who fell into three categories.

Men and women addressed as *gacũcũ* the daughters of their full and half-sisters' sons and daughters. These were only distantly related, as even their grandparents had married into different clans.

Women alone used the term for the sons and daughters of their own full and half-brothers' and sisters' sons and daughters. These people (p.841) had grandparents of the clan to which she had belonged before her marriage.

Women also used the terms for the daughters of their co-wives' sons and daughters, and the daughters of their husband's full and half-brothers' sons.

Mama

The term *mama* in its strictest sense means my mother's uterine brother, and it was used equally by both male and female. Its chief use was for that particular maternal uncle who was next oldest or next youngest to a person's mother, and so would have been her guardian if her father had died before she was married, and who would get the greater part of the marriage payments made for her in order to acquire a wife for himself.

In a classificatory sense it was extended to all the full and half-brothers of a person's mother (that is, all maternal uncles) and also to those mother's cousins whom she called *mũrũ wa baba*, that is to say, the sons of her paternal grandfather's full and half-brothers' sons, who were her classificatory brothers.

The word *mama* means, to all intents and purposes, my female father, and the special position of the mother's brother will be analysed in the section which deals with behaviour towards members of one's family.

Taata

In the strictest sense, the word *taata* means my mother's sister or half-sister, that is, my maternal aunt, but it was used also for a father's sister or half-sister. It therefore covered the full and half-sisters of a person's father and mother, and the daughters of the full and half-brothers of that person's father's and mother's fathers. These women were all his or her relations by blood.

The wives of paternal and maternal uncles, who would be called aunt in English, were not called *taata* but *maitũ* (my mother), because their husbands were his or her classificatory fathers. A man could also call all his maternal uncles' wives *mũthoniwa* (my relation-in-law), except possibly one. If he happened to have been named after one of his mother's brothers, he would not call that uncle's wife either *maitũ* or *mũthoniwa*, but *mũka wakwa* (my wife), because he had inherited that uncle's name and personality.

p.842
A woman also addressed as *taata* all those who were *taata* to her husband.

Mũrũ wa Aiya

This term, which means literally, sons of my mother's female relatives, did not, however, refer to the sons of a man's own mother so much as to the sons of close female relatives, or to close relatives related to him through a female.

It was used only by males, and exclusively for relatives who were not of the same clan. In its strictest sense it was used only for a man's male first cousins, who were sons of his father's sisters and half-sisters, and the sons of his mother's brothers and sisters, but it was extended in its classificatory sense to more distant cousins related through a female line, and to a few others who were related only by being blood relations of his wife, and of her generation.

The full list of those whom a man addressed as *mũrũ wa aiya* is as follows: the sons of his father's full and half-sisters, and of his mother's full and half-brothers and sisters, his wives' full and half-brothers, his own full and half-sisters' husbands, and the sons of his paternal grandfather's full and half-brothers' daughters.

This term was also used by a man for those cousins of paternal and maternal grandfathers who were addressed by the grandparents as *mũrũ wa aiya*. With the exception of this last category, all the people whom a man called *mũrũ wa aiya* were of his own generation, and they included all the males of his generation who were blood relations through a female line, and in addition to this, the brothers of his wives, because he and each of his wives were one and the same person, and these wives and their brothers and half-brothers were also one and the same person. A man's wives' brothers were therefore very close relations indeed, and of his generation; but they belonged to a different clan so they were called *mũrũ wa aiya* rather than *mũrũ wa baba* or *mũrũ wa maitũ*.

It should be noted here that although *mũrũ wa aiya* was never used as a term of address by a female, it was used as a term of reference by a female after she was married. She then became a member of her husband's clan and was identified with him, and she from then on spoke of and referred to her own uterine brothers and half-brothers not as *mũrũ wa maitũ* but as *mũrũ wa aiya*, just as her husband did. However, although she was not supposed to, she often forgot and did call them *mũrũ wa maitũ* or *mũrũ wa baba*. Similarly, a male referred to his married sisters not as *mwarĩ wa maitũ* but as *mwari wa aiya*.

p.843

Mwarĩ wa Aiya

This term, used as a term of address only by males, means daughter of my female relative. It was used, however, for all of the following relations: the daughters of a man's father's and mother's full and half- sisters, the daughters of his mother's full and half-brothers, and the daughters of his paternal grandfather's full and half-brothers' daughters.

A man also addressed as *mwarĩ wa aiya* those female cousins of both his maternal and paternal grandfathers whom his grandfathers called *mwarĩ wa aiya*.

Aside from this last category, all of the above were female relatives of his own generation who were related to him by blood but who did not belong to his own clan. It should be further noted that once his sisters had been married and thus become members of another clan, a man would cease referring to them as *mwarĩ wa maitũ* or *mwarĩ wa baba*, and call them *mwarĩ wa aiya*. Although the term *mwarĩ wa aiya* was never used as a term of address by a female, it was used as a term of reference, and a woman referred to her own sisters thus after either she or they married.

Wa Mũgendi

This is a shortened form of the descriptive term *mwana wa mũgendi wa maitũ* (child of the *mũgendi* of my mother). The word *mũgendi* is an alternative word for uncle or aunt, thus *mũgendi wa baba* was commonly used for a person's paternal uncles and classificatory uncles, and *mũgendi wa maitũ* was used to mean my maternal uncles and aunts. By extension it was also used for paternal aunts.

This term *mũgendi* was used as a term of address only by females, and it was used towards all those cousins whom a male addressed either as *mũrũ wa aiya* or *mwarĩ wa aiya*. They were all male or female cousins related to her through a female line, and therefore not of her own clan.

Mũihwa

The term *mũihwa* was used only by males, and it was reciprocal with the term *mama* (my mother's brother). A man called *mũihwa* all those who called him *mama*, that is to say, his sisters' children and the children of his classificatory sisters. They were all of the same generation as those (p.844) he called *mũrũ wakwa* and *mwana wakwa*, but none of them were of his clan. They were all related to him through a female line.

Mwana wa mwarĩ wa Baba and Mwana wa Mwarĩ wa Maitũ

The term *mwana wa mwarĩ wa baba* means literally, child of the daughter of my father, and it was used only by a woman, and for those whom, if she were male, she would have called *mũihwa wakwa*. The only exception to this was that she did not so address her own uterine sisters' sons and daughters, but called them *mwana wa mwarĩ wa maitũ* (children of the daughter of my mother).

Mwana wa Mũrũ wa Baba

This was yet another term of address used by women towards certain of their nephews and nieces, and it means child of the son of my father. It was never used for the sons of a woman's half-brothers, who were simply called my children. Its use was for the sons and daughters of her classificatory brothers, who were in fact not brothers at all, but cousins. These were the sons and daughters of her father's full and half-brothers' sons, and the sons and daughters of her father's father's full and half- brothers' sons' sons.

A woman, therefore, called *mwana wa mũrũ wa baba* only the children of her patrilineal first and second cousins, that is to say, the children of those who could trace a patrilineal descent from her own greatgrandfather.

Mwana wa Mũrũ wa Maitũ

This term means literally, child of the son of my mother, and it was used only by women, and for a limited number of people. Moreover, it was not used (as its meaning would seem to suggest it should have been) for a woman's uterine brothers' children, for she called each of them *mwana wakwa* (my own child). It was used instead for the children of a woman's mother's full brothers' sons, and the children of her mother's half-brothers' sons. This was due to the Kikuyu conception that we have already mentioned several times, namely that a man, his sisters, and half-sisters were one and the same person.

p.845
A woman's mother and mother's brothers were one and the same person, and so her mother's brothers' sons were as her mother's sons, therefore she perfectly logically called her mother's brothers' sons' children children of my mother's sons, whereas she called the children of her actual mother's sons' sons her own children.

Mwana wa Mũirĩtu wa Mama

This term means, the child of the daughter of my maternal uncle, and it also was used only by females, and was applied to her mother's full and half-brothers' daughters' sons, and her mother's full and half- brothers' daughters' daughters.

Mwana wa wa Mũgendi (*Also Mwana wa-a Mũgendi or wa-a Mũgendi*)

Like so many of the other terms of address used only by women, this term is purely descriptive, and means, child of the person I call *wa mũgendi*. A woman used it for the sons and daughters of her mother's full and half-sisters' sons.

Mwana wa Mũrũ wa Aiya

This term was used by men to describe one set of relatives, and by women to describe a different set. A man addressed *mwana wa mũrũ wa aiya* (child of my *mũrũ wa aiya*) all those whom a woman called *mwana wa wa mũgendi*, but he did so only as an alternative to calling them *mwana wakwa*. A woman, on the other hand, addressed as *mwana wa mũrũ wa aiya* her father's full and half-sisters' sons' sons and her father's full and half-sisters' sons' daughters. In other words, she distinguished between those who were of her own children's generation but were descended from her mother's sisters, and those descended from her father's sisters. Moreover, it must be noted that she called her father's sisters' sons *wa mũgendi* just as she called her mother's sisters' sons by this name, but the children of the former she did not call *mwana wa wa mũgendi*, but rather *mwana wa mũrũ wa aiya*. Thus she used as a term of reference a term she never used as a term of address, namely, *mũrũ wa aiya*, to describe her paternal aunts' sons.

p.846
Mũthoni Wakwa or Mũthoniwa

The term *mũthoni wakwa* or *mũthoniwa* means, a person whose relationship is one of *thoni*, a Kikuyu term which means shyness or feeling ill at ease. The term therefore implied restraint and some measure of shyness in the presence of those so called, and in extreme cases there were rules of absolute avoidance between those who were *athoni*, especially when they were of the opposite sex.

The term *mũthoniwa* or *mũthoni wakwa* was never used as a term of address for people who were related by blood, but only for relations-in-law, and yet it must be borne in mind that, although not addressed or referred to in this way, a man's children and many other blood relatives were described as *athoni kũrĩ we* (people who were his *athoni* because they were people who had to behave with restraint in his presence). The meaning and significance of *thoni* will be further discussed when we consider behaviour in a family.

In the widest sense, every relation-in-law could be classed as a *mũthoni*, but many of them were never referred to or considered as such, because other considerations outweighed this relationship. Thus the brothers of a man's wives were in a wide and vague sense his *athoni*, and yet they were addressed as *mũrũ wa aiya*, as though they were blood relations. This was due to the fact that a man and his wife were considered to be one person, and since she called her brothers *mũrũ wa maitũ* (son of my mother), he called them a corresponding term, *mũrũ wa aiya* (my brothers who are not of my own clan).

Those a male normally addressed as *mũthoni wakwa* or *mũthoniwa* were his wives' fathers and their wives, the full and half-brothers of his wives' fathers, his father's and mother's full and half-sisters' husbands, and his mother's full and half-brothers' wives, the exception to this being the wife of a maternal uncle he had been named after, as he called her *mũka wakwa*.

In all cases where a male addressed a female as *mũthoni wakwa*, there was an alternative form of address that he could use, as he could also call her *maitũ*.

The terms *mũthoni wakwa* or *mũthoniwa* were used, therefore, by a man for two different groups of relations-in-law. One of these groups consisted of males and females who belonged to his wives' fathers' generation and family, the other consisted of men and women belonging to the same generation as his own mother and father, but not to their families, being relatives only by the marriage of his mother to his father.

p.847
A woman called *mũthoni wakwa* all her mother's and her father's male relatives by marriage who were of their generation, and in addition, her husband's father's and brothers' sisters, because they were relatives-in-law of hers through her husband and they belonged to his father's generation.

Relations-in-law of one's own generation, such as brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law, were *athoni* in one sense, but they were never addressed as *mũthoniwa*, this term being restricted to those relations-in-law who were of one's father's and mother's generation. It must be noted carefully that a woman belonged to the generation of her husband, so that if a young girl married a man of her father's generation, she ceased to belong to the young generation and ranked as a member of her husband's generation.

Maramũ

The term *maramu* was strictly a reciprocal term between a man and the sisters and half-sisters of his wives. A man called his wives' sisters and half-sisters *maramu*, and a woman called her sisters' and half-sisters' husbands *maramu*.

The term was, however, extended in the classificatory sense to include the sisters of one small group of classificatory wives as far as a man was concerned, namely: his mother's father's wives' full and half-sisters, and his father's father's wives' full and half-sisters. Correspondingly, these women addressed the men who called them *maramu* also as *maramu*, so that a woman's classificatory *maramu* were the sons of her full and half-sisters' sons and daughters. So, whereas a man regarded as his *maramu* those who were *maramu* to his grandfathers, a woman regarded as her classificatory *maramu* those who were the grandsons of her real *maramu*.

Mũnyanya wa Mũka

This term means literally, lover of my wife, and it was used by males for the husbands of their wives' sisters and half-sisters (that is, husbands of a man's real *maramu* as distinct from his classificatory *maramu*), and for the husbands of his sons' daughters and daughters' daughters (that is the husbands of his real granddaughters as distinct from his classificatory granddaughters).

Its use towards the husbands of his wives' sisters and half-sisters is (p.848) curious, for he did not call these women my wife, but rather *maramu*. The explanation lies in the fact that a woman, her sisters, and her half-sisters were as one and the same person, and although his wives' sisters were *maramu* to him and not *mũka wakwa*, they were equal to his wives, and therefore their husbands were lovers of his wives. It is possible that use of the term in this sense reflects the fact that at some period in Kikuyu history a man had prior claim to marry his wives' sisters and half-sisters, as he still has in some other Bantu speaking tribes.

The use of the term towards the man's real granddaughters is much easier to understand. A man's real granddaughters were "one and the same person" as their grandmothers (that is, as his wives), therefore the men who married them were lovers of my wives.

Wa Kanyanya

The term *wa kanyanya*, which means little lover, was used by a woman primarily towards the husbands of her own granddaughters, but it was extended to the sons of her husband's full and half-brothers' and sisters' sons and daughters.

Therefore, those whom a woman called *wa kanyanya* or my little lover fell into two groups. The first of these comprised the husbands of her own true granddaughters. These granddaughters were named after herself and they were "one and the same person as herself". Their husbands were therefore her husbands, but they were not classified as *mũrũme wakwa* (my husband), since they were not of her husband's clan. The second group consisted of the grandsons of her husband's full and half-brothers and sisters. Of these, the grandsons of her husbands's brothers and half-brothers were sometimes called *mũrũme wakwa*, but they were more commonly called little lover (*wa kanyanya*), while the grandsons of her husband's sisters and half-sisters were never called *mũrũme wakwa*, since they were not of her husband's clan; they were called only *wa kanyanya*.

Mwana wa Baba

This term, which means child of my father, was used for only one group, and that was for the half-sisters of a woman's husband. She called his full sisters, as we have seen, *mwarl wa maitũ* (daughter of my mother), as though they were her own uterine sisters. One might have expected her, therefore, to call her husband's half-sisters *mwarl wa baba* (p.849) (daughter of my father), which was what her husband called them. However, this was not the case, and to distinguish them from her own half-sisters a woman spoke of them as *mwana wa baba*.

Mama wa Kĩahũ-inĩ

The term *mama* was used for a mother's brothers and for certain classificatory mother's brothers that have already been discussed. *Mama wa kĩahũ-inĩ* means distantly connected mother's brothers. It was used for a mother's father's father's full and half-brothers' sons' sons, which is to say, male cousins of a woman's mother who were of her own generation and who could trace their descent patrilineally from her great-grandfather on her father's side. These people were only distantly related, and the reason why they had a special name was that they had certain special functions (see section on behaviour).

Mũihwa wa Kĩahũ-inĩ

We have already seen that men called the sons and daughters of their sisters and classificatory sisters *mũihwa*. The children of his more distant classificatory sisters he called *mũihwa wa kĩahũ-inĩ*. These were the sons and daughters of his father's father's full and half-brothers' sons' daughters and daughter's sons, none of whom belonged to his clan.

Andũ a Rũrĩra

As has been mentioned before, a number of people related by blood but with no special terms of address were merely referred to as *andũ a rũrĩra* (people of the umbilical cord). These people belonged to different clans, and their responsibilities lay within their own clans. They were not counted as part of the extended family described in this chapter, so no more need be said about them.

Alternative Terms

There were a few terms of address and of reference that were occasionally used as alternatives to some of those listed above.

p.850
Awa

This was an alternative form of address and reference for *baba* in the sense of a person's own father, but not in the classificatory sense.

Mũgendi wa Baba

This was used as an alternative for *baba* in the classificatory sense, that is, for any of those who were called either *baba mũkũrũ* or *baba mũnyinyi*, but only as a term of reference, not of address.

Nana

This was an alternative term of address and reference to those who were my mother or close classificatory mothers.

Mũruna

This was a term of reference meaning my uterine brother immediately junior to myself. It was used only by males.

Nyarũme

This was used sometimes as a term of reference for the mother's brothers who were normally called *mama*. Its literal meaning is female man, just as *mama* implies male mother.

Mũgendi wa Maitũ

This was used as an alternative for *taata*, but not as a term of address, only as a term of reference.

Mwana wa Mũiru Wakwa

Although a woman addressed and referred to her co-wives' children as *mwana wakwa*, and although they addressed her as *maitũ* even after they (p.851) were married, she did not refer to them as *mwana wakwa* once they had homes of their own, but referred to them as *mwana wa mũiru wakwa* (child of my co-wife). She did, however, still address them as *mwana wakwa*.

Family Life and Behaviour

Having examined the Kikuyu kinship system, we must next turn to the rules of behaviour which governed the relations of a family in their dealings with each other.

Actual and Classificatory Relationships

Between Fathers and Sons

As we have already seen, a man addressed his father and his classificatory fathers as *baba*, and they addressed all their classificatory sons as *mũriũ* or *mũrũ wakwa*. Towards any man who stood in the relationship of *baba*, a male was expected to show great respect and obedience, and in fact, from earliest childhood a boy was taught by his mother to obey his various fathers without question.

From time to time a boy's actual legal father would exhort his sons to show even greater obedience and respect to their classificatory fathers than to himself. When doing so, a father would argue something as follows: "My son, take good care to be very obedient and dutiful to your other fathers, for although I am your own father, they are very important to you. Even if you anger me greatly,

I am never likely to refuse to help you, since you are the son of my body, but if you anger your classificatory fathers, they may refuse to help you, and after I am dead they might disinherit you."

A male was taught, in fact, that he would all his life be dependent to some extent upon his various fathers, and that he must therefore take care not to anger them. A young man knew that in the ordinary course of events he could rely upon his own father to provide him with goats or rams for meat feasts, or for paying the necessary fees after he had become a warrior, but he equally knew that if it was a question of the goats and sheep needed for marriage payments, or for the payment of a fine if he had committed manslaughter, he would need to look to all (p.852) his fathers to help in such a family matter, and that it therefore behoved him to keep on friendly terms with them. This he could do only by being obedient and dutiful.

So deep rooted was the idea that a paternal uncle was more important than a person's own father, that a father would usually ask one of his brothers to speak to his son for him if such a son showed signs of trying to break away from parental control, for though a man would sometimes disobey his father, only a very wayward man would disobey his paternal uncles, for fear of losing their help.

Before a male was initiated, and in fact, from the time that he went through the second birth ceremony to the time of his initiation, he was much more in contact with his father than his mother, and it was from his father and classificatory fathers that he learned the rules of life.

Parental love as between a father and son, or a classificatory father and classificatory son was very little in evidence, but the fact that it was not shown openly does not mean that it was not there. Most fathers were exceedingly fond of, and proud of, their sons, and their love for them was shown by the way in which they gave them all they needed up to the time when they became independent and had homes of their own.

In a large polygamous family it often happened that some of a male's classificatory fathers were of his own age, or even younger than himself. In such cases there was not the same need for respect and obedience to be shown to them, for the age factor was taken into account, and discounted other obligations. In fact, to a certain extent the positions were reversed and a male who had his own home and who had a classificatory father younger than himself was bound to help him when he wanted to get married, and had to supply him with goats and sheep, and also help him to provide the necessary beer feast.

Between Fathers and Daughters

A girl called her father and her classificatory fathers *baba*, and they called her *mwari wakwa*, as we have seen. While a girl was very young, her father and paternal uncles, whom she called *baba*, would play with her and let her sit on their knees, but once she was old enough to be conscious of the impropriety of relieving herself in public, her whole relationship to her own father and her classificatory fathers began to change. Such a girl, whether she had been through the second birth ceremony or not, was taught at this stage that she must no longer play with her *baba* (either her own father or a classificatory one), and that (p.853) she must take care to be modest and obedient in their presence. This was the beginning of what would develop into definite avoidance rules once she had been initiated.

The root of this custom lay in the fear of incest and of behaviour that might savour of incest. As soon as a girl was about four or five years old shc was taught that she must never eat meat in the presence of a man she called *baba*, and in fact, she never received her share of any family meat

from her father or uncles; it was sent to her mother to give to her. Her life was spent with her mother and other female relatives, and her contact with her father and uncles was slight. A father's chief responsibilities to her lay in seeing that the proper rites and ceremonies for her second birth, her initiation, and her first menses took place. He was also responsible for her clothing, but little else. Once a girl had been initiated and was grown up, her relationship to her classificatory fathers was governed by strict avoidance rules which remained in force until she was married.

Under these rules, if a girl and any of her classificatory fathers met outside a homestead, both of them had to leave the path, the uncle going into the bush to his left (to his right if they were going in the same direction), and the girl into the bush to her left. Having passed each other thus, they could go back to the pathway. Moreover, the girl and her classificatory father were not to look at each other when they met thus, but had to pass with eyes to the ground.

Should any initiated girl accidentally touch any person who was her classificatory father, she had next day to prepare a special potful of bulrush millet gruel, and get her mother or one of her classificatory mothers to take it to him as a fine for having touched him. Similarly, should a man accidentally touch one of his classificatory daughters, he had at once to take off one of his own ornaments and give it to her as a fine. In both cases the fine so paid was called "a slaughter" (*thĩnjo*), and symbolized an animal sacrificed for purification.

This law of avoidance was carried further, and if an initiated girl should *rumana* (use abusive words) in the presence of any of her classificatory fathers, even though they were not addressed to him, she had next day to prepare and send him gruel as a fine, and he in his turn had to send a goat skin to her as a fine, "because he had heard her *rumana*". This curious custom was based on the fact that a woman might utter abusive words only in the presence of her husband and her sons, and if a girl did so in the presence of a classificatory father it was tantamount to admitting an intimacy between them such as existed between husband and wife. In fact, if a fine were not paid, it would suggest that they were accustomed to an incestuous relationship.

p.854
In spite of all the rules which were designed to prevent incest between a girl and those who were her classificatory fathers, incestuous relationships between such people were not unknown, but this side of the question will be discussed in Chapter 23, since incest to the Kikuyu was a criminal matter. So great was their fear of incest between a girl and her classificatory fathers, that if a young, uninitiated girl should happen to "play at marriage" or to "play at house" with a boy who stood in the relationship of *baba* to her, a ram would have to be sacrificed to wipe away the incestuous act represented by such play.

This same rule of modesty before all those who were called *baba* was reflected in a girl's relationships with her own father. Except under the very gravest provocation, a man never laid a hand upon or beat his daughter; if she was to be so punished he made her mother or one of her brothers do so. Moreover, a father never abused his daughter with harsh words (*ruma*) once she was nearing puberty and after she had been initiated. To have done so would have implied an intimacy that should not have existed between them. Owing to this rule, as soon as a girl had been initiated, and on the day that she first came home from the initiation homestead, her father gave her a sheep or a goat which counted as a "composite fine" paid by him to her for all the times that he might have abused her from the time she was born until the day of her initiation.

The rules of avoidance between a man and his classificatory daughters were such that if a girl was sent with a message to one of her classificatory fathers, she might not deliver it herself, but had to find some third party to deliver it to him for her.

There was only one occasion when it was permissible for a paternal uncle to speak intimately with a girl who called him *baba*. If a man was especially anxious that his daughter should marry a particular man, and if his daughter refused to listen to her father's wishes on the matter, her father would send for one of his brothers or his classificatory brothers, who were her classificatory fathers, and this man spoke with her. Should a father take this drastic step and make an uncle speak to her, the girl then had to give way, for she might not disregard an uncle's advice, although she could refuse to obey her father.

By so doing, a girl entered into a new and special relationship with that particular classificatory *baba*, and if the marriage which he had forced her into failed utterly and completely, she left her husband and reported to this uncle, not to her own father, as she would normally have done in such circumstances. It would then be his duty to interview the husband and try to settle the matter, and if, in the end, the marriage (p.855) should end in divorce, he, and not the girl's father, would be responsible for refunding the marriage payments.

Once a girl had married she no longer had to avoid her classificatory uncles, and, moreover, they no longer addressed her as *mwarĩ wakwa* (my daughter), but in future as *maitũ* (my mother). The reason for this has been given in the section dealing with the term *maitũ*. From this time on her father and her classificatory fathers treated her with the same respect as they treated their own mothers.

Between Mothers and Sons

As long as a male child was very young, he was intimately associated with his mother, and in fact, as we have seen, all of a woman's children were regarded as part of herself until they had been "born a second time", after which they became entities of their own.

Once a boy had been through the second birth ceremony, he began to grow independent of his mother and came more and more under the influence and control of his father and paternal uncles. At the same time, he was dependent upon his mother for food until the time that he married and had a wife to cook for him, and even after marrying and setting up his own home, a man always received food from his mother every evening if his home was within reach of hers. Later, when her husband died, a woman usually took up her residence in her eldest son's homestead and continued to her death to send a dish of food to his hut every night. In fact it might be said that the relationship between a man and his mother was the closest that was ever formed in Kikuyu family life, and it was a bond which lasted for life.

A male child ceased to be at the beck and call of his mother from an early age because his work was to look after goats, sheep, or cattle, and generally to assist in "men's work" under the orders of his father and classificatory fathers, but this very fact seemed to make the tie with his mother all the stronger.

Towards his classificatory mothers, especially those nearest to him, such as his father's other wives and his father's brothers' and patrilineal cousins' wives, a male was taught to behave as he would to his own mother, because in the event of her death, it would be one of these other women who would stand in the relationship of *maitũ* to him, and who would take over the duty of providing him with food every day. Every boy child was taught at an early age that he must respect, honour,

and obey all those who were *maitũ* to him, and that he had definite obligations to them, including the obligation to help clear ground for them to cultivate.

p.856
One of the worst offences any male could commit was to use abusive words towards his mother or any of his classificatory mothers, and should he have so far forgotten himself as to do so, he would have to plead for forgiveness and give a present of a ram or a goat as a fine for his ill manners.

Moreover, a male who used bad language in front of his mother or classificatory mothers would very soon find that none of his age-group companions would have anything to do with him. This is reflected in the Kikuyu proverb which runs, "*Mũndũ ũrumaga nyina ndagũaga wega*" (A man who abuses his mother does not fall well). In other words, the Kikuyu believed that a man who behaved so would be constantly dogged by misfortune, and warriors would be unwilling to let such a person accompany them on raids or any other adventures. His bad luck would spoil their plans.

A male Kikuyu was therefore given every reason to behave with love and respect towards those whom he called *maitũ*, and indeed, he was commonly expected to be even more careful of his behaviour to his classificatory mothers than to his own actual mother. His mother, because she loved him, would always forgive him, no matter how often he offended her, but a classificatory mother might reach a point where she would no longer forgive, and then it would be sad indeed for the man who had given offence, for a mother's curse, even if it was only that of a classificatory mother, was one that nothing could wipe out save her own free will. However, although a male was taught to obey the orders and wishes of his mother and his classificatory mothers, he might do so only as long as they were not counter to the orders and wishes of his father and classificatory fathers. Their word was law and overrode all other orders. Refusal to obey a father might mean disinheritance and being disowned by the whole patrilineal clan, which would be even worse than a mother's curse.

Between Mothers and Daughters

Whereas a male after the second birth ceremony gradually came less and less under the influence of his mother, and was only dependent on her after that for food, a girl remained in the very closest contact with her mother until she was married, and even after marriage, as we have already seen, her first public act was to go and pay a ceremonial visit to her mother to symbolize the fact that her first duty—outside her duties to the family into which she had married—was towards her mother.

A girl, from her birth to her marriage, was dependent upon her (p.857) mother for everything. She was brought up from earliest childhood to obey her mother implicitly. Even after initiation had made an adult of her, she was still supposed to sleep in her mother's hut, or at least to tell her mother where she was going when she went to dances and stayed a way all night. This was partly because a mother wished to keep control of her daughter and safeguard her from being foolish enough to let any man have full intercourse with her, and partly because it was essential that a woman should always know where her unmarried daughters were, so that if any ceremony or sacrifice had to take place in connection with that woman, her daughters could be summoned. Once a son had been through the second birth ceremony his presence was no longer essential at most of the ceremonies connected with his mother's hut, but a daughter's presence was essential up to the day that she married and became a member of another clan. Prior to initiation, a girl had to sleep in her mother's hut, and failure to do so was a just reason for a severe beating.

Towards her classificatory mothers a girl was not quite so rigidly bound to obedience as a boy, because she had more obligations to her own mother, and therefore less time to do things for the others. At the same time, every girl was taught that she had to respect and obey her classificatory mothers, because their help would be needed in all the ceremonies connected with her marriage, and it would be a misfortune indeed if a girl so alienated the friendship of her classificatory mothers that they refused to help in the ceremonies of her wedding. After a girl married and became a member of another clan, her duties to her mother grew less and less, but she was still bound to go and help her own mother when called upon to do so, provided that the giving of such help did not prevent her from fulfilling her duties in her own home.

Between Uterine Brothers

A man called his uterine brothers *mũrũ wa maitũ*, and his behaviour towards them was governed principally by their respective ages. The eldest son of any woman was potentially not only her guardian but also the person who would be *in loco parentis* to all other sons should their father die. Consequently, all sons other than the first-born were taught from early childhood to be respectful towards their elder brothers, and if when they were young they failed to show respect, an elder brother was at liberty to chastise them, and frequently did so. A boy would be foolish indeed if he failed to keep on friendly terms with his eldest brother, for if their father died, it would fall to that brother to negotiate (p.858) all the first marriages of the others, and to help them collect the necessary marriage payments by allocating to them a portion of the family flocks and herds.

In normal families the relationships between brothers were very good, but occasionally, if there was a junior brother of outstanding personality, great jealousy could arise. This was due to the fact that an elder brother knew that if he mis-managed the family affairs after his father's death, he might have his birthright taken from him and a younger brother promoted to head of the family in his place. In the ordinary course of events, therefore, junior brothers were on much better terms with each other than they were with the first-born (*irigithathi*).

The last-born son of any mother (*kĩhinga-nda*) also had a privileged position, for he was usually his mother's favourite and she saw to it that her eldest son dealt very generously with her youngest. Moreover, by custom, the last-born son ranked very close to the eldest son in importance in the family, and usually there was a closer friendship between the eldest and youngest than between any other two brothers in a family.

Any married brother was under an obligation to contribute towards the marriage payments of his yet unmarried brothers, because the marriage payments were a family affair and not an individual one. It was because of this that a man always addressed the wives of his brothers as *mũka wakwa* (my wife).

Between those Females who called each other Mwarĩ wa Baba

Classificatory sisters were as nearly united to each other as classificatory brothers, but only until the time of their marriage. After that they belonged to the families they had married into, and their obligations lay there.

Up to the time of their marriage, girls who were classificatory sisters all helped each other and were taught that they could expect help from each other. Thus if a girl was asked by her uterine or half-brother to help him get grass to thatch a hut, or carry poles for building, she immediately called upon her classificatory sisters to help her, and they did likewise in similar circumstances. Classificatory sisters, moreover, nearly always arranged to work in groups, five or six of them

joining together and working on successive days in their respective gardens. This made for a much more pleasant life than they could have had otherwise, for in this way they could chat and sing as they worked, and there was nothing a Kikuyu disliked more than working alone.

p.859
Every girl had definite responsibilities towards her junior classificatory sisters, and on the occasion of the initiation of any one of them, all the senior classificatory sisters who had already been initiated were bound to contribute a necklace or other ornament, so that the girl who was to be initiated might be fully covered in beads to hide her nakedness in the pre-initiation *matuumo* dancing.

Moreover, when each of the various classificatory sisters of any family was married, all her unmarried and initiated sisters had the right to a share of the goats and sheep that were given to the bride. She was the one who was being married, but they were her sisters, and as such they were her, and what was hers was theirs.

Between Uterine Brothers and Sisters

From a very early age every girl was taught to be respectful and obedient to her uterine brothers and to regard them as her natural guardians. She was also warned very early, and so were they, that they must take great care never to do anything that might savour of incest, and even in their games little brothers and sisters could not "play at house" together and pretend they were husband and wife. As they grew older and started, as some children did, "playing at marriage", they had to be even more careful, for even playing at incest might have disastrous effects upon the fertility of the girl, according to Kikuyu ideas.

Once a boy had been through the second birth ceremony and had thus acquired a personality of his own, he might never again sleep in the children's bed with his sisters. He had either to sleep in his father's hut, or else, if he did continue to sleep in his mother's hut, he had to have a part of the children's bed partitioned off from the rest and sleep away from his sisters. When they grew up, brothers and sisters had to continue to behave in a seemly and modest fashion towards each other, and it was absolutely taboo for any girl to dance with a uterine brother. Not only so, but a girl could never partner a man who was standing next to her uterine brother in any dance, as if she did so she might touch her brother accidentally, or see his unseemly sexual gestures in such dances as the *mũgoiyo*.

In the event of a girl contracting a friendship with any of her brothers' friends, she had to be careful never to sleep with her lover in any hut where her brother was sleeping with a lover of his own, or even in a hut where her brother was sleeping alone. If a young man had a but of his own and invited a number of his men and girl friends to (p.860) come there for the evening, his uterine sisters would come and join the party and provide food, but when it was time to go to sleep, they had either to go back to their mother's hut, or if any of them had a lover in the party, she had to go off with him and sleep in someone else's hut, or even take him to have restricted intercourse (*nguĩko*) in the children's bed of her mother's hut, rather than have *nguĩko* in the same hut as her brother.

Between those who called each other Mũrũ wa Baba

All those males in a family who called each other *mũrũ wa baba* (son of my father or my half-brother) were brought up to regard each other with mutual respect, because in time they would become interdependent and would together form the *nyũmba* (family) when their father's generation had died out.

From the days of their childhood and early youth, a male was closely in contact with his true *mũrũ wa baba* (the sons of his father by all the father's various wives), and as the boys grew older they came more and more into contact with their classificatory brothers as well, that is, the patrilineal cousins of their own generation, and by the time they were all warriors there was a close bond between them. As they reached marriageable age, each in turn would call upon the various people he called *mũrũ wa baba* to give what help they could towards his marriage payments, although in the case of the marriage of a first wife each of these men looked more to their classificatory fathers for such help than to each other. Nevertheless, each man, as he himself became a married man with his own home, looked upon it as an obligation to help his as yet unmarried classificatory brothers to obtain wives.

Not only so, but as we have already seen, the wives of any man were counted in theory as the wives of all those he called *mũrũ wa baba* and were addressed as such, and the children of any one of them counted as the children of them all. In fact, those of any family who were *mũrũ wa baba* to each other were like one person, they were "the family", and their generation would eventually be superceded by the family as represented by all their sons jointly, who would all be *mũrũ wa baba* to each other.

In due course, as the fathers of one generation died out, the eldest sons of each family took over the responsibilities of father to the rest of their brothers and sisters, and jointly, the eldest sons of each member of the senior generation became the family council, which had to be consulted in all family matters. Even those who were not eldest sons (p.861) gradually also became members of the family council as they married and reached the status of elders.

In view of all this, it is obvious that males had to be brought up from the earliest age to think of all their brothers and classificatory brothers as people who were to be helped in all things, and consulted in all important matters, and it was rare to find any serious dissension among such a unit. If there was one individual who was not in harmony with the others, he suffered because he was in a minority, and he had either to bow to the will of the majority or leave, and probably forfeit all his family rights.

The solidarity of the family, as represented by the brothers and male patrilineal cousins of each generation, was one of the most striking things, and to the Kikuyu themselves one of the most valuable things, in their whole organisation; it was the foundation of all Kikuyu life and social organisation.

Between those who were Mũrũ wa Baba and those who were Mwarĩ wa Baba

The contact between all males who were *mũrũ wa baba* to each other was close, but that between a *mũrũ wa baba* (son of my father) and a *mwarĩ wa baba* (daughter of my father) was not so close. Real brothers and sisters who had the same mother and father were very closely united, and half-brothers were also fairly closely united with their half-sisters, especially if their half-sisters happened to have no uterine brothers, but patrilineal male and female cousins, although they were classificatory brothers and sisters to each other if they were of the same generation, were not bound to each other. This was in large part due to the fact that when they married, these girls would all pass out of the family, and after that their interests would be watched over only by their uterine and perhaps their half-brothers, and of course, by their fathers.

Whereas a man was very definitely prohibited from dancing with any of his uterine sisters, there was no taboo against his dancing with his classificatory sisters, but even when they were cousins

and not actual half-sisters, he still could not take them as his *nguĩko* lovers, for this would have been incestuous. At the same time, it was admitted that men did sometimes take their more remote classificatory sisters as lovers, and that cases of their causing them to become pregnant were not unknown. If this happened, a man who thus committed incest was made to pay a ram for a fine, but he did not have to pay the normal fine often goats and sheep and four stall-fed sheep or goats for having caused the girl to conceive, nor could he marry her, however much he (p.862) wished to do so. The reason for his not having to pay the normal fine was that if he did, the family would be fining itself. He was entitled to ask all his classificatory brothers to pay a part of such a fine, which would, in this case, be paid to themselves. As the Kikuyu said, "How can a family fine itself?"

Between a Man and those whom he called Mũka Wakwa

In considering the behaviour of a man to a woman he addressed as *mũka wakwa* (my wife), we must make a clear distinction between his actual wives and his classificatory wives, for although they were called by the same term, they were treated very differently.

Towards his own wife a man was absolute lord and master, and the woman was expected "to be obedient in all things to her husband", and yet this did not mean that there was not real love and comradeship between a man and his wives, and more especially between a man and his first wife. As we have already seen, a man seldom married a first wife except for love, and having married each other out of love, a man and his first wife were in the normal course of events, on exceedingly good terms with each other.

In most Kikuyu families a man would invite his wife, or wives, to his hut in the evening, and there they would spend long hours discussing events and happenings in the community. Moreover, most Kikuyu men consulted their wives in connection with their activities and told them all that was going on. For instance, a man would always tell his wife, or wives, when he took some of his cattle or goats and sheep to be boarded out (*hithia*) with a friend, and on his return from a visit to see how his stock was getting on he would tell his wife, or wives, all the news. A man was usually both kind and considerate to his wife, and most men and their wives were on exceptionally good terms.

As we have already seen, a man always consulted his wives before marrying again, and not uncommonly left the choice to his wives, or at least chose a bride that they approved of.

It was perfectly normal for a man to tell his wife that he had spent a night with the wife of a member of his age-group, and no jealousy was felt because of this, as it was a recognised thing. Similarly, if a husband sent a man of his own age-group to sleep in the hut of one of his wives, that wife would always tell him next day whether or not that man had had sexual intercourse with her, and if not, whether it was she who had taken a dislike to him, or whether it was the man who had been "cold".

In their sexual relations with each other a husband and wife were (p.863) normally on the very best of terms, and it was an axiom of Kikuyu life that a man would not attempt to have sexual intercourse with his wife unless she desired it. There were, of course, exceptions to this rule. A man might have to have sexual intercourse with a wife for ceremonial purposes even when she did not wish it, but this was a "sacrifice" that every woman accepted as such. Secondly, when a man who already had several wives took a young bride, he sometimes found her at first unwilling to allow him to have sexual intercourse with her, and under such conditions he was entitled to enforce

his "marriage rights" even to the extent of getting one of his other wives to hold the bride while he had intercourse with her. This was, however, rare. If a man suspected that a wife was refusing to let him sleep with her, not once, but again and again, because she had some secret lover, then he might force his attentions on her and even beat her if she refused him, but this would happen only in a case where relations were bad between them anyway.

A man and his wife were expected to behave with modesty towards each other in public, and this was even extended to their own courtyard, even if there was no one else present, for the courtyard was a public place. In particular, it was taboo for a man and his wife to see each other naked out in the courtyard, and if by any chance both a man and his wife came out in the middle of the night to relieve themselves, thus seeing each other naked in the open, it was a very serious matter, and on the following day a ram would have to be slaughtered for a purification ceremony. Another rule governing modesty was that a woman might never wait naked in bed for her husband. If he was coming to spend the night with her, she must leave her skirt and apron on, and let him remove them. It would be the height of immodesty for a woman to wait naked in her bed for her husband, and would suggest great impatience. Kissing was regarded by the Kikuyu as a sexual act, and it was immodest to kiss in public; a man could kiss his wife only when he was in bed with her.

The chief obligations that a man had to his wife were to provide her with fields to cultivate (this included the obligation to clear the land of bush for her and dig it up ready for her to harrow), to provide her with ˢkins for clothing, a good hut, and such ornaments as she required. On her part, her obligations consisted of preparing a dish of food for him every evening and a cold meal to eat during the day, to behave well to his friends, and to help him in beer making. Persistent failure to carry out these essential obligations by either party was considered grounds for divorce.

A man and his wives were usually so fond of each other that they continued to have sexual intercourse long after the woman had passed (p.864) the climacteric, and the only women who normally ceased to have sexual intercourse after the climacteric were those who became midwives.

Towards a classificatory *mũka wakwa* a man's attitude and behaviour were quite different. They were not really husband and wife, and their use of the terms *mũka wakwa* and *mũrũme wakwa* respectively was purely theoretical. A man had no obligations to any of his classificatory wives, and he had no right whatever to have sexual intercourse with any of them during their husbands' lifetime. This rule applied not only to sex acts for pleasure, but also sex acts for ceremonies, and no man could ever ask another man who was a classificatory husband of his wife's to perform a ceremonial sex act with her. Furthermore, the rule forbidding sexual intercourse between a man and his classificatory wives overrode the rule that allowed a man to have intercourse with the wives of the members of his age-group. If a man did by any chance break this rule and have intercourse with a woman who was his classificatory wife (during the husband's lifetime), it was treated as a serious case of adultery, and the man would be punished by the whole of his clan and family. And the actual husband would never again have intercourse with a wife who had committed adultery with one of her classificatory husbands, for if he did he would surely die! The only rights that a man had with regard to sex as far as his classificatory wives were concerned were the rights to discuss sexual matters with them, and make jokes about sex and jocular remarks of a lewd character.

Between those who called each other Mũiru

The term *mũiru* was used, as we have seen, for co-wives and classificatory co-wives, and by derivation it was a noun made from the stem *iru*, which means jealousy. It would be a great

mistake, however, to jump to the conclusion that because a co-wife was called literally, "one who is jealous", that there was any jealousy in the European sense between the wives of a polygamous Kikuyu, or even between classificatory co-wives. In fact, the use of the term *mũiru* (one who is jealous) for a co-wife, had no reference to actual jealousy of the type which a European would expect to exist, but referred rather to a special kind of jealousy due to the fact that each co-wife was "one and the same person as their joint husband". Thus, as long as a man had only one wife, the personality represented jointly was divided between only the two of them. As soon as a man took a second wife the personality was (p.865) divided among the three, and so on until the personality of a man who had, say, nine wives, was divided among ten people, and to this extent, and in this sense, they were jealous because of the shared personality. That there was seldom jealousy in the European sense, is borne out by the fact that most Kikuyu wives urged their husbands to marry other wives, and indeed, often insisted on choosing their co-wives, and even thought little of having their husband sleep with a new bride in their own bed with themselves lying alongside!

In the normal Kikuyu family it might, in fact, be said that the relationship between actual co-wives and classificatory co-wives was very good indeed. It would be a foolish woman who did not establish and maintain good relations with her co-wives and classificatory co-wives in view of the extent to which they were dependent upon each other for material help and service in their daily lives.

When one woman was sick and temporarily incapacitated, it was to her co-wives, or in the absence of such, to her classificatory co-wives, that she looked for help in cooking and drawing water. When a ceremony of any kind was to be centred in the hut of one woman, and beer had to be brewed and food cooked for the ceremony, a woman was dependent upon the help of her co-wives and classificatory co-wives, and if she did not maintain friendly relations with them her life would be very difficult. In fact, the communistic doctrine of mutual help within the family had its highest development in the mutual help which co-wives gave each other in all the work of the home.

The form of jealousy which a European woman might feel because her husband was living with another woman was absent, because from earliest childhood the women had grown up in polygamous homes, and in girlhood they had shared *nguĩko* lovers with the other girls. To them the idea that the sex life of a husband and wife had to be restricted to the two of them was quite foreign. The only form of sexual jealousy that arose in a Kikuyu family was if a husband did not observe the recognised rules of married life, and bestowed his favours unequally. Only rarely, however, did this occur, for it would be an unwise man indeed who showed too much favouritism to any one wife, as he would soon find his home broken up.

In a polygamous family, of course, the first wife that a man married was always the senior wife, and the one who was most closely concerned in all ceremonial matters connected with the family as a whole, but it was rare to find a senior wife who was unfair to her junior co-wives, for she was too dependent upon their help and co-operation in all sorts of ways to risk alienating them and losing their assistance.

In spite of all that has been said in the foregoing paragraphs, it (p.866) would be foolish to suggest that there was never enmity or jealousy between co-wives, but it was a rare thing. Moreover, if a man noticed such a position developing, it was his duty as the husband of all his wives to try to improve the situation.

Between those who called each other Kairu

The people a woman addressed as *kairu* (little co-wife) were not very closely related, and between them there were no special obligations. The behaviour of such people to each other was friendly, but it was not governed by any special rules or even by any accepted customary practices. This was due to the fact that contact between such people was rare, as they belonged to families who, under normal conditions, were not living very close at hand.

Between a Man and those whom he called Guka

Guka was, as we have seen, a reciprocal term between real and classificatory grandfathers and their real and classificatory grandsons. The relationship between these people was governed by the fact that they counted as "one and the same person". When a man went to visit his paternal or maternal grandfathers, and to a lesser extent his classificatory grandfathers, he knew that he could count upon a warm welcome, and that he would be given the best food available. Also, a man knew that if his grandfathers were still alive when he reached a marriageable age, he could count upon them to give him some sort of contribution towards the marriage payments, and when he went to make a request for such a contribution, he said, "*Kaĩ atarĩ we ndĩrakũgũrĩra mũka?*" (Is it not for you that I am acquiring a wife since you and I are "one"). A grandfather saw in his grandsons and classificatory grandsons a continuation of himself. We would live again through them after he died, thus for a man to die before he had grandchildren was a tragedy, for he had not seen for himself that his seed was going to live on.

Between a Female and those she called Guka

As far as females were concerned, the term *guka* was not reciprocal, and a man called those women who called him *guka*, *mũka wakwa* (my wife), since they were "one and the same person" as their grandmothers, who (p.867) were his wives or classificatory wives. Moreover, as a girl grew up and ceased to be a child, she no longer called her grandfathers and classificatory grandfathers *guka*, but instead addressed them as *mũrũme wakwa* (my husband), and the relationship between a man and his classificatory wives has already been discussed.

Between Males and Females and those whom they called Cũcũ

The term *cũcũ*, as we have seen, was applied to grandmothers and classificatory grandmothers, and between classificatory grandmothers and their classificatory grandchildren of either sex there was no shyness or restraint, but rather freedom and great friendship. Grandmothers treated their classificatory grandchildren with great leniency, spoiling them in many ways and even treating them as equals, which to the Kikuyu they were. Many of those who were classificatory grandmothers to a male were also his classificatory wives, since they were the classificatory wives of his grandfathers. Others, such as his grandfathers' sisters, were in a sense a boy's own sisters, since he and his grandfathers were "as one person". In these facts lie the clues to the great freedom between grandmothers and grandchildren, the relationship being about the same as that between brother and sister or husband and wife.

Those whom a male called *cũcũ* usually called him either *mũrũme wakwa* (my husband), or *wa kanyanya* (little lover), and as husband or lover of his classificatory grandmothers he was given all kinds of tit-bits and special presents, and it was not taboo for him to use abusive language in their presence, although he might not use it towards them. Those whom a female called *cũcũ* usually called her *gacũcũ* (little grandmother), or *kairu* (little co-wife), and the relationship was one of equality and friendship, in which the senior showered special presents on the junior, and the junior did all sorts of special work and errands for the senior.

Between Males and Females and those whom they called Ūcũkũ

All great-grandparents and classificatory great-grandparents were called *ũcũkũ*. Between great-grandparents and their great-grandchildren there was a relationship of fear and avoidance, especially on the part the *ũcũkũ*. A man or woman who had great-grandchildren and classificatory great-grandchildren had at all costs to avoid touching (p.868)

them or letting them touch him or her, unless the touching was accompanied by an anointing with oil "to wipe away the evil". The Kikuyu believed that if a man or woman was touched by a great-grandchild without oil being used, death would follow quickly. So great was this fear that very old men and women who were great-grandparents usually sat during the day in the courtyard with a stick with which to drive away any children who approached them closely, lest perchance they should be great-grandchildren and therefore dangerous.

Between Males and Females and those who were their Cũkũrũ

The term *cũkũrũ* was used for great-great-grandparents on the father's side, but it was so very seldom that a man ever lived to be a great-great-grandparent that there were no special rules governing this relationship, for it was the rarest thing for a man or woman ever to have contact with those who called him or her *cũkũrũ*. In fact, the term was most commonly used in reference to deceased great-great-grandparents, rather than as a term of address.

Moreover, whereas a man or woman who was very old might live in the home of one of his own grown-up grandsons (with whom he was as one person), he had to take care to avoid his grandson's children, who called him *ũcũkũ*. He never lived in the homes of those who called him *ũcũkũ* when they had grown up, and so he would, even if he lived long enough, have little or no opportunity of coming into contact with those who called him *cũkũrũ*.

Between Males who stood in the Relationship of Mama and Mũihwa

Whereas the general rule in Kikuyu organisation was that a man had no close bond tying him to those of his relatives who were not of his own clan, there was one very important exception, and that concerned a man and his mother's brothers and classificatory mother's brothers. More particularly, a man had very close ties with that uterine brother of his mother's who would have been her guardian if her father had died before she was married, or after his death if she had made matrilocal and matrilineal marriage, or had been divorced. But the other brothers and half-brothers of a man's mother were also in a very special relationship to their sisters' and classificatory sisters' sons.

Any man who refused any reasonable request made to him by a man who was his *mũihwa* (sisters' son), would not only be behaving in a (p.869) shameful manner, but also would involve himself in a grave risk of misfortune, for the Kikuyu believed that a man who denied anything to his *mũihwa* without good cause would certainly be punished by supernatural powers. Similarly, any man who refused to help his mother's brothers, and more particularly that special one, would be guilty of a grave breach of good behaviour and would forfeit his right to expect things from his maternal uncles.

When a man wished to get married, he was fully entitled to ask that special maternal uncle for a contribution, and his mother's brother was under a definite obligation to help him as far as he

reasonably could. The Kikuyu's own argument in support of this is worth giving in full. It is an explanation that I heard on several different occasions, and in different words, but always along these lines:

> If a man's sister had been born a male instead of a female, her sons would have had a legal right to claim help from their uncle (who in those circumstances would be a paternal uncle). The accident that made her be born a female instead of a male does not wipe away his obligations to help her sons and daughters. Moreover, supposing that the man's sister did not marry by the normal patrilineal rules, but instead had married—as a proportion of girls did—matrilineally, her brother would have had full responsibility to find first wives for her sons, since they would then be legally his children and not the children of their physical father. Therefore, a man must help his male *mũihwa* to marry by giving a contribution to the marriage payments.

Another Kikuyu argument that was sometimes added is this:

> A man and his sister are one and same person, therefore her children are in a very special way his children, and he must help them; he is their male mother and a mother must help her children as far as she can.

The relationship between a *mũihwa* and his *mama* was such that he had the right to do almost anything he liked in the home of his *mama*. He could always rely on being given the choicest food there, and he could, if he wished, even go so far as to take one of his uncle's fat rams for a meat feast, and kill it without asking permission, provided only·that he returned its head to his *mama*, to show that he had not "stolen" it, but had taken what was his by right. Since a man might not do this with his own father's animals, it is clear that his relationship to his *mama* was a very special one indeed.

A man's rights towards his *mama* did not, however, entitle him to use abusive language towards him, and if he should so far forget himself as to do so, he would have to pay a fine (*thĩnjo*) to him before he could be (p.870)

forgiven. A man might, however, abuse his *mũihwa*, who was like a son to him.

As a further example of the special link between a man and his nearest *mama*, that is to say, the *mama* who was regarded as his mother's guardian, we may take the following facts. When the first-born child of a man's sister was old enough to have his or her ears pierced, the father and mother might not proceed to do so until they obtained the formal permission of this uncle. He always gave this permission, but he added that his permission was subject to the promise that, as soon as the child had been initiated and become a full adult, his father would hand over the five goats and sheep which were called *mbũri cia matũ* (the sheep for the ears). That is to say, that for the right to pierce the ears of a first-born child, the father had to pay five animals to the mother's brother, but these did not become payable until the child became an adult, so that if the child should die before initiation, the payment was not made. Moreover, when the first-born child of any woman was about to be initiated, her husband had to pay her brother one ram and one he-goat as a fee to obtain permission to have the child initiated.

The same rule applied in connection with the initiation of the last- born child of the woman (the *kĩhinga nda*, or child that closed her womb), but for this child no *mbũri cia matũ* were payable.

On the other hand, whenever any son or daughter of a man's sister was initiated, he was bound to make a present of at least one goat to his newly initiated *mũihwa*, and he also had to take quantities of food and beer to the child's father as an *ithemba* (offering in honour of the occasion).

Between Females and those whom they called Mama

A girl was treated in much the same way by her *mama* as a boy was, and he would give her almost anything that she asked for within reason. In particular, a girl commonly went to her *mama* when she wanted a new suit of clothes, and he was then bound either to give her enough skins for the suit, or a live goat or sheep with which to buy skins.

If a girl's mother was legally married into another clan by a normal patrilineal marriage, the mother's brother did not receive any part of the marriage payments, but he was entitled to a special share of the beer brewed in connection with the various marriage feasts. If, on the other hand, his sister was married matrilineally, the daughters would count as his own daughters, and he would arrange their marriages, and (p.871) would take all of the marriage payments for the use of getting wives for his nephews, by the same sister.

A girl was often asked by her mother's brother to help in connection with such tasks as hut building, and she had to do as he wished, provided it did not entail disobeying her legal father and mother.

Whenever any girl was initiated, her mother's brother received from her legal father the fee of "a ram and a goat for tradition" (*mbũri cia kĩrĩra*) in order to give permission for her to be initiated.

Between Males and those whom they called Taata

Those whom a man called *taata* were his paternal and maternal aunts and classificatory aunts (but not aunts by marriage). A male behaved towards these women as he did towards his own mother. All those who called a woman *taata* were called by her *mwana wakwa* (my child), and the relationship was that reflected by the term, namely, the one which existed between a woman and her children.

Any male, whether a boy or grown man, could always go to the home of anyone who was his *taata* and demand to be fed by her, or if she was out he had the right to help himself to food from her granaries or the food store in her hut. This was a right which he had with his own mother, and it was extended to his aunts and classificatory aunts, but not to his classificatory mothers.

In fact, although a male did not call these aunts *maitũ* (mother), his relationship with them was much more like that of mother and son than was the relationship between a man and his classificatory mothers. Moreover, although we might have expected to find avoidance rules between a man and his aunts similar to those which obtained between a girl and her classificatory paternal uncles, no such laws existed. The reason given for this was that there was no temptation to commit incest between a man and his aunt, whereas there was between a girl and her uncle. In view of the fact that in a polygamous family a man commonly had aunts of his own age or younger than himself, this is somewhat surprising, but the fact remains. Although there was no strict avoidance rule, a man could never dance with one of his young aunts, nor might he indulge in any kind of horseplay with them. Their behaviour towards each other had to be seemly.

One possible explanation for the lack of strict avoidance rules towards a *taata*, but the existence of such rules toward a *mama*, is as follows. It is fairly clear that the term *taata* was originally applied only to a man's matrilineal aunts, and that its extension to a father's sisters (p.872) and half-sisters came with the change-over to a patrilineal system. Under a matrilineal and matrilocal system a man's maternal aunts would be living in the same homestead as himself, and their relationship would be one of close intimacy in daily life, and, in fact, they would be like mothers to him, just as his mother's brothers would be as fathers to him. Similarly, in a matrilineal society a girl would seldom see or meet her paternal uncles, so that the avoidance rule became unnecessary

in preventing the likelihood of incest taking place when they did meet as comparative strangers. With the change-over to patrilineal and patrilocal marriages as the general rule, the old customs were maintained.

Just as a man could always be called upon by his mother to help her cut bush and make clearings for her fields, so an aunt could always demand the help of those of her nephews who called her *taata*, for she was like their mother, and they were under an obligation to help her in return for the right to be fed by her. If a woman refused her nephews the right to food, they could then, and only then, refuse to help her prepare her gardens.

Between Females and those whom they called Taata

The relationship between a female and those whom she called *taata* was similar to that between males and their aunts. A girl looked upon her aunts as being more or less in the same relationship as a mother, although she did not call them *maitũ*. This relationship was one of great love and respect, and a girl would always go to help a *taata* if asked to do so, because her aunts would always give her food if she wanted it. Such aunts never had any actual responsibilities towards nieces who called them by this name; their behaviour towards them was based upon love and not upon obligation. This was because no *taata* was ever a member of one's own family (except paternal aunts before they were married), and they could have no obligations to any clan but their own.

Between Males who were Mũrũ wa Aiya to each other

Although a man's *mũrũ wa aiya* were just as closely related to him in fact, as those who were *mũrũ wa baba* to him, his relationship towards them was totally different. This was due to the fact that those who were *mũrũ wa aiya* to him were cousins through a female line, so that none of (p.873) them were members of the same clan as the people who called him *mũrũ wa baba*.

Kikuyu boys were brought up to regard their *mũrũ wa aiya* as close friends, but as people who could not be asked for anything as a right, only out of friendship. Moreover, wheras a man who accidentally killed someone who was his *mũrũ wa baba*, and so a member of his own clan, did not have to pay any blood money, if a man killed a cousin who was *mũrũ wa aiya* to him, he had to pay the full blood price of 100 goats and sheep, as though he had killed a complete stranger. If a man's *mũrũ wa aiya* was in need, friendship might demand that he be helped, but there was no obligation to help—those who had to help him were those he called *mũrũ wa baba*.

Between Males and those whom they called Mwarĩ wa Aiya

Every boy was taught from childhood that although those of his cousins who were *mwarĩ wa aiya* to him were not of his own clan, being related to him through a female line, they were nevertheless "people of the same umbilical cord" (*andũ a rũrĩra*), and they must therefore be treated with due respect. In no circumstances could a man or boy have sexual contact either in the form of *nguĩko* or full sexual relations, with a girl who was *mwarĩ wa aiya* to him, but he might dance with her as his partner.

Should a man take a *mwarĩ wa aiya* as a lover, and should this fact become known, he would not be actually punished (unless he had had full intercourse and not just *nguĩko*), but he would be much ridiculed by all his companions, and ever afterwards he would find it hard to get any girls as his *nguĩko* lovers, for they would regard him as an unclean man who had incestuous tendencies.

Every girl was warned by her mother at an early age that it was just as important for her to avoid sexual contact with those who were *wa mũgendi* to her (those who called her *mwarĩ wa aiya*), as it was to avoid it with her *mũrũ wa baba*, for if she should let a *mũrũ wa aiya* have intercourse with her it would either make her barren or make all her children still-born. Whereas a man would not have had to pay any fine for causing a cousin who was *mwarĩ wa baba* to him, to conceive, if he caused one who was *mwarĩ wa aiya* to him to do so, he would have to pay the full fine, and moreover, he would not be allowed to marry her even if he wished to do so.

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Between Girls who were wa Mũgendi to each other

Girls were taught that although their female cousins who were *wa mũgendi* to them were close relatives who should be helped if possible there was no obligation of any kind towards them, and they could not call upon them to assist in any work except as friends.

Between a Woman and those whom she called Mwana wa Mwarĩ wa Baba Mwana wa Mwarĩ wa Maitũ, Mwana wa Mũrũ wa Baba, and Mwana wa Mũrũ wa Maitũ

All those whom a woman addressed by the above terms were people who called her *taata* (aunt), and the relationship between aunts and their real nephews and nieces has already been discussed.

Between a Woman and those whom she called Mwana wa Mũiritu wa Mama, Mwana wa Mũrũ wa Aiya, and Mwana wa wa Mũgendi

In the table listing terms of relationship, and also in the analysis of that table, the only people who have been shown as *taata* are maternal and paternal aunts. These were the people most commonly spoken of and addressed as *taata*, but there were others who were, in a vague way, classified as such. These were the female cousins of a person's mother and father who addressed that person as *mwana wa mũirĩtu wa mama*, *mwana wa wa mũgendi*, or *mwana wa mũrũ wa aiya*.

The relationship between these people was friendly, but it was governed neither by rule nor by custom, for these classificatory aunts and classificatory nieces and nephews were of different clans, and fairly far removed from each other. Marriage between them would not be possible unless a ceremony of "breaking the relationship" took place, but they would be at liberty to dance with each other and even to take each other as *nguĩko* lovers (provided they did not have full intercourse), without any penalty being incurred.

Between a Man and those whom he called Mũthoniwa

The behaviour of a man to those of his relations-in-law whom he called *mũthonuwa* was one of friendship combined with a great degree of (p.875) respect, and a man had to be careful not to insult them, nor to touch them in any way except to shake hands with them. For instance, when attending a beer drink together, no man might ever sit next to a man who was *mũthoniwa* to him, but had to have a least one other person sitting between the two of them. This was in order that they might not touch each other, and especially not touch each other with their feet (*matikanarangane*).

A man had certain definite obligations to anyone who was his *mũthoniwa*, and any man might always ask help from his *mũthoniwa* to pay a fine. There was, however, a difference in the behaviour towards a *mũthoniwa* who belonged to the family from which a man had obtained a wife, and a *mũthoniwa* who belonged to a family to which a daughter belonged by marriage.

Once a man had married a girl of a particular family, the senior members of that family could always call upon their son-in-law, or classificatory sons-in-law, for further goats and sheep, on the grounds that when he married their daughter they had let him off certain things.

Towards his father-in-law and classificatory fathers-in-law a man had to be very careful. He could call upon them to help him with the gift of a goat or sheep to pay a fine, but he could never ask them to give him any help toward marriage payments for another wife. In fact, when a man who already had one or more wives wanted to marry another, he was bound by custom first to obtain permission from his existing fathers-in-law and classificatory fathers-in-law. He had already contracted certain obligations towards them, and without their consent he might not start negotiating another marriage, which would increase his obligations.

In actual practice, a father-in-law seldom refused to give his son-in-law permission to negotiate for another wife, for he would always argue that his daughter would like to have a co-wife to help her with the many women's duties in the homestead.

When a man met a woman who was *mũthoniwa* to him, he did not avoid her in the way he avoided his brother's daughters. He got off the path to let her pass along it freely, but he did not need to avert his eyes; in fact, he looked at her and greeted her by shaking hands with her.

There was one very important rule that every man had to observe towards anyone who was *mũthoniwa* to him, and who was his senior, and that was that he could never expose his nakedness in front of them, He had married one of the daughters of these people, and it would have been unseemly for them, therefore, to see his genitalia. Should a man expose his genitalia in front of a *mũthoniwa* except by accident, (p.876) such as the wind blowing aside his garment, he immediately had to produce a fat ram to be sacrificed for the purification ceremony. This rule was considered to be of such importance that it had a retroactive application, and if a man had exposed his genitalia in front of a man or woman and subsequently married one of their daughters or classificatory daughters, he had to pay the fine in respect of his past offence against this rule. Consequently, no young man would bathe in the presence of an older man who was not a blood relation, as he might later want to marry one of his daughters.

A man called his wife's mother *mũthoniwa*, but he also called her *maitũ* (my mother), and he was fairly free in his behaviour towards her. Her co-wives, however, and the wives of his wives' paternal uncles were people whom he had to be particularly careful not to offend in any way. This was because the actual mother of his wife would almost certainly forgive him for the daughter's sake, whereas her co-wives and classificatory co-wives would have had no such feelings, and if offended might curse him in such a way as to make him fail in all his ventures.

Between those who called each other Maramũ

A man called the sisters and half-sisters of his wives, *maramu*, and a woman called the husbands of her sisters and half-sisters *maramu*. The relationship between such people was governed by fairly strict rules. Although those who called each other *maramu* were usually very friendly, they could not in any circumstances dance with each other (in fact, other than to shake hands, they could not even touch each other), lest they should be tempted into sexual intercourse with each other, which, to the Kikuyu, was one of the worst possible forms of incest. It was considered essential that those who called each other *maramu* should avoid any kind of sexual contact, even to the extent of avoiding the performance of sex acts when those whom they called *maramu* were present. Thus when a woman came to visit a married sister or half-sister, the husband could not come and

sleep with his wife that night, even if his wife's sister was not sharing her bed, but was in the children's bed of the same hut. If a woman should be visited by a sister or half-sister (who was *maramu* to her husband) at some time when ceremonial sexual intercourse between the husband and wife was essential, they had to make arrangements for the sister to sleep in some other hut in the homestead, for a man could not possibly sleep with his wife if his *maramu* was anywhere near.

Similarly, if a young married man was dancing, he had not only to (p.877) avoid taking a sister or half-sister of his wife as partner, but had also to see to it that she did not dance next to him in the dancing circle. If she did, she might see his nakedness and his semi-sexual acts which were common when dancing, and this would have been serious and would have suggested an incestuous intimacy between them. In other words, although there were no avoidance rules of the type which existed between girls and their paternal uncles between people who called each other *maramu*, there was a kind of avoidance in that they had to take great care not to be present when either was engaged in any sexual practice.

Between Males and those whom they called Mũnyanya wa Mũka

We have already seen that those whom a male called *mũnyanya wa mũka* fell into two categories: the husbands of those his wife called *maramu*, and the husbands of his granddaughters. Those in the former category were usually men of more or less the same generation as the man himself, and between them there was usually a considerable degree of mutual help. A man would usually help those who had married his wives' sisters with a goat or a sheep when they needed one, and would in return expect help from them when in need himself. These men were all linked together by the fact that they had the same father-in-law, and although they had no legal obligations to each other, they had strong customary ones.

On the other hand, those in the second category of *mũnyanya wa mũka* were merely the husbands of his granddaughters, and so were in some cases men who had married girls of his own clan and who had obligations to that clan. These were the men who had married his sons' daughters. His daughters' daughters belonged to a different clan altogether, and thus the men who married them had no obligations to his clan, and he had no obligations to them. At the same time, for sentimental reasons a man would usually help such a person, except in the matter of raising marriage payments. As far as the first category was concerned, the term was reciprocal. In the second category those whom a man called *mũnyanya wa mũka* called him *guka*, as did their wives.

A Woman's Relationship to those whom she called Wa kanyanya

A woman addressed as "little lover" people of two categories, her own granddaughters' husbands, and the grandsons of her husband's brothers, sisters, half-brothers, and half-sisters. Towards all of these (p.878) people of both categories her attitude was one of restrained friendship, and there were no special rules of behaviour or even customary behaviour. She treated them as she felt inclined to do.

Between a Woman and those whom she called Mwana wa Baba

The only people whom a woman addressed as *mwana wa baba* (child of my father) were the half-sisters of her husband, and as his half-sisters, they were entitled to special consideration, so if they came to visit their half-brother they were given the best of everything. Since they were his half-sisters, they were almost the same as himself, and so had to be treated as he was treated, with deference and respect.

Between those who called each other Mama wa Kĩahũ-inĩ and Mũihwa wa Kĩahũ-inĩ

Distant classificatory maternal uncles and their distant classificatory sisters' sons and daughters had very little to do with each other, but there was one obligation which lay with the former to the latter. In the event of any person suffering from certain types of skin disease, they were sent in search of someone who stood in the relationship of *mama wa kĩahũ-inĩ*, and it was believed that the touch of such a person would automatically arrest the complaint. Apart from this, a *mama wa kĩahũ-inĩ* had no obligations, special duties, or rules of behaviour, towards anyone who was his *mũihwa wa kĩahũ-inĩ*.

Modificatins of Terms of Address in Marriages other than Normal Patrilineal Ones

In those cases where a widow married a young "wife", the widow became the "legal husband", but her "wife" did not address her as *mũrũme wakwa* (my husband), but as *maitũ* (my mother). The new wife had no one whom she addressed as *mũrũme wakwa*, for the physical husband she chose to be the father of her children could not be so addressed. As she had no male husband, she had no classificatory husbands either. When she bore children, they called their mother's legal husband "grandmother", and the eldest son was named after the legal husband's deceased husband.

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This shows us clearly that, although the marriage was recognised as being that of a woman to a female husband, it was in theory the female husband's non-existent son who was marrying the new wife, and if we think of the marriage in this way the whole position becomes simplified rather like a normal patrilineal marriage, except that there was no legal male husband, in spite of the marriage being patrilineal.

In the case of a real matrilineal marriage, whereby a girl did not marry into another clan, but had children by one or more lovers and lived in her father's or brother's homestead, the kinship system did not differ fundamentally except that the girl's children did not have any relatives-in-law who were recognised as such, or any relatives on the father's side, such as father, classificatory fathers, and patrilineal cousins who were classificatory brothers. In such cases, too, the *mama* (mother's brother) assumed a far greater importance to the children, and he was a person to be obeyed implicitly, as well as a person who provided all material requirements. The responsibility to provide for the marriage of his sister's sons was his, and in consequence, a mother's brother in such matrilineal marriages could not be treated with such freedom as in a patrilineal family.

In the case of a matrilineal marriage whereby a serf (*ndungata*) was given a girl of his patron's family to marry, the children grew up as the members of the patron's family and clan, but they were allowed to recognise their physical father as an actual father, and called him *baba*. However, none of the relations of their physical father counted as relatives at all, so that they had no classificatory fathers and no classificatory brothers. On the other hand, if a patron made the marriage payments for a serf as though the man were his son, the children still belonged to the patron's family, but they were allowed to recognise their physical father's brothers and relatives as relatives of their own, and so they did have classificatory brothers and fathers. They also applied the term *baba* to their patron's sons' sons, since they were taught to regard the members of his family as members of their own family. They thus had three sets of relatives instead of two: their mother's relatives, their father's relatives, and the relatives of the patron, who, by making the marriage payments for his serf, made all the serf's children members of his own clan and family.

In such cases the corresponding relatives of the father's family and father's patron's family had the same terms of address, the patron counting as a kind of supernumerary father of the serf, and therefore grandfather to his children.

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Inheritanc Laws

In the normal course of events, when a man knew that his death could not be long delayed, he called his sons, made his will, and divided up his property among them as he thought best. His will could not then be disputed after his death. There were cases, however, when a man was unable to make a will, in which case the following recognised guidelines were followed.

Inheritance of Property

If a senior married man died who had no living younger brother or half-brother, and left no will, then his property had to be divided up in the following manner.

Those members of the family (*nyũmba*) who were of council status assembled after the ceremony of *kũhukũra* for the deceased had been completed, and an ox was slaughtered for them called *ndegwa ya kũgaya* (the ox for the dividing (of the property)).

These elders then directed that all the stock of the deceased be brought together into the courtyard, including all the stock which had been boarded out (*hithia*), but which had by now been brought back. Then the elders instructed the sons to remove all animals that were obtained as marriage payments for any of their sisters, and these animals were, for the time being, shut into the huts of the mothers of the married girls for whom these animals had been paid as *rũraacio*, for such animals were absolutely earmarked for the children of that hut, and could not be divided up among the sons of any other hut.

This having been done, the elders proceeded to divide up the remaining goats, sheep, and cattle which were the absolute property of the deceased elder.

The first-born sons of each wife of the deceased who had not yet married were given a number of animals, say 10, 20, or even 30, according to the wealth of the dead man, to form the nucleus of their ultimate marriage payments. They were also directed to take charge of, and to use for the marriage payments of their junior brothers, the stock derived from the marriage payments made for their full sisters, if any, or that which would be derived from such marriage payments when these girls did marry. Any surplus stock that was the absolute property (p.881) of the dead man was then divided among the various huts of his widows to supplement the stock earmarked for those huts, and to be used for the needs of members of the families of each respective widow.

If there was a widow who had no son but who was still of child-bearing age, and who might therefore still bear a son (who would legally be the son of the deceased man, no matter who the physical father might be), then a full eldest son's portion was allotted to her when all the eldest unmarried sons received their portions.

Eldest sons who were minors received their full share just as eldest sons who were already initiated but unmarried, but their share was then handed to one of the half-brothers to take charge of on their behalf.

Married sons did not receive any share of the father's stock unless there was a considerable surplus after each unmarried eldest son had been provided with a nucleus for his ultimate marriage, and after a further division had been made to supplement the stock earmarked for each widow's own family. If there was a surplus then, the married sons might be allotted a few head of goats and sheep each.

If there was a very young widow of the deceased elder, who had no more than one very young child, she was normally inherited—in the case we are dealing with at present—by the eldest unmarried son of the father, and she would become his physical wife. All the other widows took up residence with their married sons, if they had married sons, or with their grown-up but unmarried sons if they had no married ones, and they then bore children by lovers, but the children were the legal sons and daughters of the deceased man.

The question of the inheritance of the land of the deceased will be dealt with separately under land inheritance laws.

If a senior elder died intestate who had one or more younger brothers or half-brothers still living, then his property was not divided up as described above, but the brother next in age to the deceased became the sole heir to all his brother's property and also to all his responsibilities. That to say, he stepped into the shoes of his dead brother and became responsible for all his property, for the welfare of all his widows, and for all his children. He could not take any of his deceased brother's property for his own private use, but he was comptroller of it, and he would apportion it for the needs of the family of the deceased as and when necessary.

This younger brother nominally inherited all the widows of the deceased, but this did not mean that he, *ipso facto*, inherited them as his physical wives. He did, however, inherit the responsibility to look after them, clothe them, provide them with gardens, and look after their interests in matters of ceremony, purification, and sacrifice.

p.882
If any one or more of the widows liked him and wished to have him as the physical father of the children she would bear for her deceased husband, she might become his physical wife, but if the widows preferred, they would arrange with him "to raise up seed" for the deceased by having lovers of their own choice. If and when the brother or half-brother who had inherited his deceased brother's property and responsibilities died, then the next younger brother or half-brother to him inherited them (if there was such a man surviving), otherwise the property was treated as described above.

Inheritance of a Young Married Man's Property who had his Homestead as a Subsidiary to that of his Father

Young married men whose fathers were living could not make a will and dispose of their property according to their own wishes. Their property was inherited by the brother or half-brother next youngest in age to them, who inherited the responsibilities of the home, the care of the property, and the task of looking after the widows. In such a case, if the widows were agreeable, he could also take them as his physical wives provided that he already had at least one wife of his own. If such a younger brother or half-brother had not yet married, he could not take his older brother's widows as his physical wives even if he wanted to and they were willing, until he had first married some other woman as his own full and legal wife.

Although a young married man whose father was alive could not make a will and dispose of his property, he could, if he so chose, select one of these brothers as the inheritor of his responsibilities to the exclusion of the others.

Thus, if he was not on good terms with a younger brother or half-brother immediately next in age to him, who would inherit the responsibilities as above in the normal course of events, he could,

before his death, appoint any one of his brothers, including one of those older than himself, as his inheritor, to take over his responsibilities and the charge of his property.

Such a man's inheritance rights could not later be disputed, and to do so would be to incur the wrath of the departed spirits. If the man so appointed was an older brother or half-brother, he could not in any circumstances become the physical husband of any of the widows. If he was a younger brother he could become the physical husband if the widows consented, as they normally would do.

p.883
Inheritance of Properly by Women

If a senior elder had a widow who was barren and who had no living children, then that woman would inherit a full share of property equal to that of the senior unmarried sons of each of the other wives. This share was hers absolutely, and she was then told to select one of the younger sons of one of her co-wives to be her adopted son. Having done so, she became responsible for feeding and keeping this adopted son, and he became responsible for looking after her stock, slaughtering rams for her from time to time when she wanted meat, and doing the man's work in her home.

He did not, however, by being thus adopted, get any rights whatever to the sheep and goats that she had inherited, except that he became heir to them on her death, and she might, if she liked, give him some of them from time to time. Should he take them from her without her consent, she might in her own right sue him in a *kĩama* council.

Inheritance of Property of an Unmarried Man

Unmarried men very often had property of their own which they had obtained either as their share of a raid on the Maasai or as animals obtained as presents from friends and relatives after they had killed a Maasai warrior (see Chapter 24). Should a young man owning such property die unmarried, and should his father be still alive, or his father's successor, then his father or his father's successor became the owner of that property and used it for the benefit of the brothers and half-brothers of the deceased as he thought best. Should the father be dead, and there be no successor, then the stock of the unmarried man became the property of his mother, or if his mother was dead, his adopted mother, who was the person who had normally provided his food and performed ceremonial sex acts for him when such were necessary.

Inheritance of the Property of a Married Woman

As we have already seen, when a woman married she was given one or two goats and sheep by her father and by her husband's parents, and these formed the nucleus of the stock that lived in her hut and which was earmarked for all ceremonies connected with that hut, including (p.884) sacrifices, second birth ceremonies, and initiation of children. If a woman died with no children living, then the stock that was hers and that was earmarked for her hut was taken over by her husband, and when the *hukũra* ceremony for her was over (to cleanse the living from the blight of death), he divided her stock up among the other wives.

If a married woman died and was survived by children, then her own stock and the stock earmarked for her hut and her family was kept for her children and their needs, although it had to be transferred to the hut of one of her co-wives or to the men's hut, as her hut had to be pulled down. This stock could be used, however, only for the benefit of her own children as long as there were any living.

Inheritance of Minor Property

Apart from stock and from land and cultivation rights which we shall deal with presently, no Kikuyu had much in the way of property that could be inherited. Among the Kikuyu initiation guild people, ornaments and garments were buried or disposed of with the corpse. The disposal of other minor property such as stools, food drums, and weapons will be described in Chapter 22 on death. Among the Ũkabi guild people, a proportion of ornaments were taken off the body before death, and these and the minor property such as drinking horns, were divided up among the family during the *hukũra* ceremonies.

Inheritance of Debts

All debts incurred by a man or woman were inherited by whoever inherited the property and responsibilities of that person.

Inheritance of Land

The land in South Kikuyu, as we have already seen in the chapter on land tenure (Chapter 4), was all divided up into *gĩthaka* units (estates), which were originally acquired by purchase either from the Wandorobo, or from some Kikuyu who had himself purchased it from a Ndorobo· In the normal course of events, when a man who owned land died, the whole of his land passed into the possession of his "family", as represented by his male descendants and his younger brothers and half-brothers (p.885) and their male descendants. This family unit, which then came into the ownership of the estate, was called a *mbarĩ*, or sub-clan. Land on that estate, which was under cultivation by the members of the family, including widows of the deceased and female dependants, remained as a part of the estate as a whole, but the people who had areas of cultivation retained their individual cultivation rights so long as they were using them, and they could pass on their cultivation rights to their children without impairing the unity of the estate as a whole.

Administration of the estate, once the original owner had died, was put into the hands of one individual male member of the *mbarĩ*, who was called the *mũramati*, or trustee. On all minor matters he had sole control, but for decisions of major importance he had to consult a full family council of the adult male members of the family. Any member of the family had the right to demand cultivation areas on the family estate so long as there was available cultivatable land, and any members of the family could, with the consent of the family council, take on tenants (*ahoi*), who were responsible to the man who took them on to the estate.

Although each individual member of the family had prior cultivation rights over the land he or she had cultivated, such prior cultivation rights did not amount to ownership, and no individual member of the sub-clan could sell any portion of the family estate without the consent of the family council. Such consent was rarely given.

In some cases a man bought several different estates during his lifetime, and then the position was somewhat different. Such a man could, before he died, make a will and give one or two of his lesser estates outright to one or other of his sons. If he did so, then during the lifetime of that son the estates so given to him were his and only his, and he could sell them or otherwise dispose of them as he wished. Once he died, however, that estate could not be normally subdivided among his sons and younger brothers (if any), but had to become a family estate, held by the male members of the family as a whole.

A man who was the original purchaser of a piece of land could, during his life, sell or otherwise dispose of the whole or any part of his own private property, and he could, and in very rare instances did, actually subdivide his land among the various first-born sons before his death. If he

did this, then the various portions of his estate so divided up became the absolute property of the sons to whom they were apportioned, and they then became the founders of sub-clans of their own, and these individual portions of the original estate became new and separate estates, which in normal circumstances would not be further subdivided among the family, but become sub-clan property.

p.886
A whole estate was very seldom indeed subdivided in this way, but on the other hand, portions of an estate, large or small, were from time to time sold by the sub-clan elders as a whole, in order to pay some debt or fine, such as compensation for murder or manslaughter. Alternatively, a portion of an estate was sometimes alienated to some other family in lieu of compensation for a man killed. Land so alienated or land sold by the family as a whole became the absolute property of the person who bought it, or the family to whom it was handed in lieu of compensation in stock. Such a portion of an estate thus cut off from the original became a new and separate estate.

Land that was individually owned, and that had not yet passed into sub-clan (*mbarĩ*) ownership, could be subdivided by the owner, and a portion of it sold for goats and sheep with which to pay marriage payments for a wife for himself, or for one of his sons. Alternatively, a man who was the individual owner of an estate could actually hand over a portion of his land in lieu of marriage payments, and unless a divorce took place before a wife so obtained had had more than one child, that land became the absolute property for all time of the person to whom it was transferred, or of the family from which the girl came.

Once land had become sub-clan land, no portion of it could be sold by any member of the family in order to raise marriage payments unless all the male adult members of the family consented, which they seldom would do. On the other hand, a man who was a member of a landowning family could obtain a loan on his cultivation rights for that portion of a family estate over which he had such rights. This was not a sale or even a mortgage on the land, but on the crops grown on that land, and such a transaction did not in any way give the person who thus temporarily acquired the cultivation of that plot any right in the land.

Sometimes a man who had obtained great wealth for himself by raiding Maasai cattle, or by killing Maasai warriors and being given presents at the *kaarĩ* ceremony would, during his father's lifetime, buy portions of the land owned by his father (that is if his father was an individual owner) so that at his father's death they might become his own, and not sub-clan (*mbarĩ*) land shared by him with his brothers. In such cases he would buy from his own father, who would use such stock for his various responsibilities, such as providing marriage payments for his other sons.

In all disputes connected with land, if the dispute was between different members of the family owning the estate, the case was settled by the elders of the family among themselves and was not taken before the *kĩama* council. It was a family affair, and the family would arbitrate (p.887) and settle the matter. If, however, a dispute arose over boundaries between two different landowning families, then the case was taken before the council, and each family was represented by the trustee (*mũramati*), who had been appointed by the family to administer the estate for them. Both plaintiff and defendant had to pay the council elders a fee of two fat rams each, and the case was heard in the first instance by a court of elders derived from both territorial units, together with elders of an independent area, where the hearing took place. If the decision of the court was rejected by either party, it went to an appeal court, and if the decision of the appeal court was rejected by either party,

the oath of *kũringa gĩthathi* or *kũringa thenge* would be administered to the representatives of both families.

Since perjuring oneself while taking either of these oaths caused death not only to the man taking the oath, but to any relatives involved in the case, members of a family would not allow their representative to take such an oath unless in their own minds they were satisfied that their case was a valid one.

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Chapter 21 – Sickness and its Treatment

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Introduction

Among the Kikuyu, ill health and diseases of many kinds were attributed to a variety of causes, some medical and some magical. Thus treatment depended not only on the physical diagnosis, but on which power was thought to be the agent of the illness. Six principal causes of ill health were recognised: infectious epidemic diseases, infectious non-epidemic diseases, natural causes, influence of angry departed spirits, witchcraft (*ũrogi*), and the breaking of taboos. We shall therefore have to consider sickness and its treatment with reference to each of these six categories.

Infectious Epidemic Diseases

Kikuyu country before the coming of the European was, from time to time, ravaged by epidemic diseases such as smallpox, chicken-pox, and measles, and all such diseases were classified together by the Kikuyu as *mũrimũ*. Each different *mũrimũ* had a special descriptive name, beginning with a *mũ*-prefix. Therefore, before we examine the various diseases classed as *mũrimũ*, and their treatments, we must briefly consider the significance of the word *mũrimũ* and the use of the *mũ*-prefix.

In the Kikuyu language, as in all Bantu languages, there are a number of different noun classes, each with a distinct prefix both in the singular and in the plural. Moreover, we find that as a general rule the nouns that belong to any given class are linked together in some way. In Kikuyu, nouns referring to human beings, for example, belong to the class which has a singular prefix *mũ-* and a plural prefix *a-*. There is another class of nouns whose singular prefix is *τηῦ-*, but which has as its plural prefix *mũ-* instead of *a-*, and it is to this class that the word *mũrimũ* belongs. When we examine the nature of the objects in this class, we find that it includes most—but by no means all—plants and trees, most of the epidemic and infectious diseases (all those that rank (p.889) as *mũrimũ*), and a few words such as *mweri* from *mũ-eri* (moon), *mũthenya* (day), *mwaka* from *mũ-aka* (year). Upon analysis, it appears that all the objects in the *mũ- mĩ-*class are linked together by the concept that they are imbued with a non-human spirit.

"This digression into linguistics illustrates the Kikuyu conception of those diseases which were classed as *mũrimũ*. They were diseases caused by a supernatural, non-human agency, and they had to be treated accordingly.

It should be noted that by no means were all of the diseases that European science would class as epidemics regarded as *mũrimũ* by the Kikuyu, but this is due to the fact that the Kikuyu and European conceptions of disease differed greatly.

Let us consider each of the diseases classed by the Kikuyu as an epidemic, infectious *mũrimũ*, and see how the patients were treated and how the disease was combated.

***Mũtũng'ũ* (*Smallpox*)**

Smallpox was one of the most dreaded diseases. If this disease broke out in the country, the Kikuyu felt that the evil spirit responsible had to be ceremonially driven out of the land in the way that will be described in detail later in this chapter. If the disease was very severe, prayers were also offered to Ngai, the God of the Kikuyu, asking that He remove the scourge, for God could both send and withdraw a *mũrimũ*. The ancestral spirits, on the other hand, to whom prayers were offered in many circumstances of Kikuyu everyday life, were never prayed to concerning a *mũrimũ*, for they had no control over a *mũrimũ*, and the diseases which they could inflict and remove were never ranked as *mũrimũ*.

In addition to taking steps to drive smallpox *mũrimũ* from the land, by means of drives and by prayers to God, the Kikuyu had certain other steps which they took to prevent the spread of the disease. In the first place, as they regarded smallpox and all similar types of *mũrimũ* as infectious, they did all in their power to isolate the victims and thus prevent the *mũrimũ* from spreading. Therefore, as soon as any person was known to be infected with smallpox, he or she was taken out into the bush, where a small temporary shelter was built. The patient was left there.

If any close relative had previously had smallpox and had recovered, then that person was appointed as nurse and attendant, for the Kikuyu (p.890) knew by experience that no person could be attacked by smallpox twice. If there was no such person to care for the patient, then he was left quite alone, but each day relatives brought food and water, left it a little way away, and called out so that the patient knew where to fetch it. If the patient was too ill to go to the food and water, he or she died, for no one not known to be immune would act as nurse. If the patient recovered, well and good, but if death came, it could not be helped.

In addition to this custom of isolating people infected with smallpox the Kikuyu made use of a primitive and yet efficacious method of vaccination (*gũcanjana*). When I first heard of this I wondered whether it was really an original Kikuyu practice or a custom adopted from the Europeans.

Careful enquiry and the checking and cross-checking of information from very old men and women left no doubt that the Kikuyu were practising the simple form of vaccination described below, long before the first European entered their country. I discovered as well that the Maasai in certain areas also used this method of fighting smallpox, having learned it in the distant past, it was said, from the Kikuyu.

When an epidemic of smallpox broke out, men who were immune to it, through having had it and recovered from it, were detailed by the leaders of the community to act as vaccinators. They had to find and visit smallpox patients in their isolation huts in the bush, and whenever they found one who was past the climax and who was beginning to recover, they obtained serum from him for

vaccination. The process was crude but effective. The pustules of the recovering patient were pricked with a thorn, and the pus squeezed on to a leaf. With the pus thus collected, the vaccinator went to the homesteads, made cuts in the skin of people who wished to be vaccinated, and rubbed in a little of the pus. This process infected the people so treated with a very mild attack of smallpox, from which they did not die and which did not seriously inconvenience them.

This Kikuyu method of vaccination had three serious drawbacks. First, there was always grave danger that the vaccinators might accidentally take pus from patients who were not yet past the climax, in which case the people vaccinated were given too active a dose of the disease, and died. Secondly, the amount of serum available was often very limited, as it depended upon finding people who had passed the climax and who were recovering. Thirdly, the vaccinations could not start until the epidemic was well under way, and many people were already dead, dying, or seriously ill by this time. Nevertheless, there is good reason to believe that this method saved the lives of a great many (p.891) people, and prevented the smallpox epidemics from being quite as severe as they were among some other tribes.

The uncertainty of the treatment made it less attractive than it would otherwise have been, and in some areas it was never used at all, for people preferred the risk of catching smallpox to the risk of being vaccinated with serum that was too potent.

The Kikuyu explanation of the process of vaccination of which they were making use was not in the least related to modern medical ideas. In their way of thinking, they were transferring a worn out and weary evil spirit from a recovering patient to a person who was liable to be diseased. By so doing, they put the spirit of the disease into the healthy person at a stage when it had not enough force to kill its new host. They had no conception whatever of germs, and their realisation of the connection between flies and the transference of disease was also, as we shall see presently, not scientifically interpreted.

If a person who had been taken out to an isolation hut eventually recovered, a ram was killed on the day that he or she was to return home, and the undigested stomach contents were given to the erstwhile patient. With this he or she had to rub his whole body as an act of purification before resuming normal life. Any garment that the patient had with him in his isolation hut and any utensils were similarly treated. It was believed that this washed away all infection and purified the articles.

Mũthandũkũ (*Chicken-pox*)

The Kikuyu regarded chicken-pox as similar to smallpox but not dangerous, except to very young children. But while chicken-pox was not regarded as serious in itself, it was treated seriously because the Kikuyu believed—to quote their own words—that, "*Mũthandũkũ nĩguo ũrehaga mũtũng'ũ*" (It is chicken-pox that brings smallpox). Because of this belief in a close connection between these two diseases, whenever chicken-pox broke out, immediate steps were taken to organise a ceremonial drive to expel the spirit from the country, lest it should turn into smallpox with all its terrible consequences.

Individuals suffering from chicken-pox were not isolated, but were treated with red ochre, mixed with cold water into a paste called *kĩng'arũ*. This was then rubbed all over the body and left to dry. Especially thick applications were made over those parts of the body where the pox pimples were most prominent. When the paste had (p.892) completely dried it was rubbed off with frayed banana bark fibre (*mbuutha*), which in Kikuyu medical practice took the place of cotton wool. The whole

body of the patient was then anointed with rendered down fat from a virgin ewe. This treatment was supposed to reduce the irritation and also to cause the pox pimples to dry up more rapidly than they would have done otherwise.

Small children sometimes died from the fever that accompanied the other symptoms of chicken-pox, and therefore, although isolation was not regarded as essential, simple precautions against the unnecessary spread of the disease were adopted. Children who were suffering from chicken-pox could not be looked after by children who had not already had the disease, nor could they play with them. In spite of these precautions, the disease usually spread through the village rapidly. This in itself was not regarded as a very serious matter, provided that the ceremony for driving out the spirit took place in good time, so as not to give the chicken-pox a chance of "turning into smallpox".

***Mũthũũkũ, also called Gĩthũũkũ* (*Measles*)**

Measles was regarded by the Kikuyu as a somewhat serious disease because a high proportion of those who became infected died from it, or from some complication arising from it. The name itself means "the bad disease", being derived from the verb *thũũka* (be bad). According to the Kikuyu, measles was particularly serious for fat children, for with them the fever was very high, *mwĩrĩ ũkahiũha mũno* (the flesh gets very hot).

It was also recognised that measles often affected the eyes seriously and impaired the eyesight for life. Whenever an epidemic of measles occurred, steps were immediately taken to prevent its spread by magical means. In addition to the ceremony of driving out the spirit of the disease from the country, members of each homestead or village near the outbreak called in a medicine-man to come and protect their homes by means of magical ceremonies, described below. In addition to this, individuals who were suffering from measles were treated as follows.

Red ochre was powdered and mixed with earth from a molehill (*tĩri wa huko*), and then with sugar-cane beer. The resultant liquid was rubbed all over the patient's body, particular attention being paid to the parts where the rash was worst. A portion of this mixture was also given to the patient to drink. Then the hair of the patient's head was (p.893) shaved carefully in lines, leaving ridges of uncut hair between lines of bare scalp. This was called *kwenjwo ngurura* (to be shaved in lines). Next, leaves of the plant called *terere* were rubbed vigorously over the patient's whole body so that the juice of the leaves was smeared all over the skin. This treatment, as a whole, was said to give relief to the patient and to hasten recovery.

***Mũngaĩ* (*Mumps*)**

Mumps was not regarded by the Kikuyu as a disease of a serious nature, but it was unpleasant, and it was a common practice to organise a "drive" to expel the spirit of mumps from the country.

No attempt was ever made to isolate children suffering from mumps, for it really did not matter much if the other children got it. At most it inconvenienced them for a few days, and if they did not catch it this time they surely would on some future occasion. Individuals suffering from mumps were not treated by herbal or other internal or external remedies, but were instructed how to get rid of their complaint by means of a curious form of sympathetic magic.

A child who developed mumps had big earrings of broken gourd made for him by his parents. These were threaded on to a string, which was passed over the forehead so that the earrings hung down on either cheek over the swollen glands.

After dark, the patient wearing these earrings was instructed to run out into the bush beyond the entrance to the homestead and start calling out the Kikuyu alarm cry. After a few moments somebody would hear the alarm and answer it. As soon as this happened, the patient had to call out, "*Iyũkia mũngaĩ waku*" (Take your mumps), and at the same moment snatch the earrings off his head and cast them upon the ground. He then returned to the homestead and it was held that he or she would recover almost immediately.

An alternative and similar magical way of getting rid of an attack mumps was for the patient to don the earrings as already described and go out by day to look for a *mũtũndũ* tree. Having found one, he stood in front of the tree and addressed it as though it was a being that could hear and understand what was said to it, he said, "*Mũtũndũ, iyũkia mũngaĩ waku*" (*Mũtũndũ* tree, take your mumps), at the same time taking the earrings off and casting them at the base of the tree. It should be noted that this particular species of tree had many "mump-like" swellings on its stem.

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Infectious, Non-epidemic Diseases

Infectious diseases that were endemic but not epidemic were also held by the Kikuyu to be caused by a non-human spirit, and were therefore also classified as *mũrimũ*. Since they were not, however, diseases that affected everyone, or that spread with any startling rapidity, they were never driven out by means of organised ceremonial drives. However, as a certain degree of infectiousness was recognised, if a case of one of these diseases was discovered, a medicine-man was called in to perform the magical ceremony of *kũrigita* to prevent the evil spirit responsible for the disease from spreading its influence to other people. In addition to this, people suffering from a *mũrimu* of this type were usually isolated to a greater or lesser degree according to the nature of the disease. Let us now examine the diseases that fell into this category, and the treatments used for them.

***Mũcarĩ* (*Yaws*)**

This disease (sometimes confused with leprosy), was very much dreaded. It could be cured only if it was recognised and treated in its early stages, as once it had a real grip on its victim, there was no hope of recovery. The person suffering from it would in consequence have a very unhappy life and ultimately a miserable death, as he or she was constantly avoided.

No one knowingly slept in a bed with a person suffering from yaws, or even slept on one that had been used by such a person, nor did they let such a person eat out of the same gourd vessel with them or share a drinking vessel. Moreover, the Kikuyu held that if a *mũcarĩ* person scratched himself in the presence of others he would cause the disease to spread to all those who were present at the time.

There were, however, exceptions to this rule of constant avoidance. Some people obtained a special treatment from the medicine-man which was said to make them immune from *mũcarĩ* infection, and those so treated had no fear of infected people. Married men who had become infected with yaws sometimes had their wives and families immunised in order that they could continue to live a more or less normal life in their own family circle, even though people as a whole shunned and avoided them.

p.895

There was another exception to the avoidance rule. People infected with yaws, but in whom the disease was not active, were regarded as safe and were not avoided. In some cases they were people

who had been treated with the herbal remedy mentioned below, and in whom the disease had been arrested and the open sores healed, but who still had the disease dormant in their systems.

For this treatment, which it was claimed often effected a complete cure in cases where the disease had not secured too firm a hold; little chunks of the branches of the *mũteta* tree were chopped up finely and boiled for a long time, until the water was thoroughly infused with the juices of the tree. This water was then strained off and mixed with a little honey. The patient had to drink some of this mixture every day for a period of three to six months. At the same time, the leaves of the plant called *mũtũkia* were collected and boiled for a very long time until a dark fluid was extracted. This dark fluid was heated until it became thick and sticky, and was then liberally applied to all open sores. The combined external and internal treatment was said to effect a cure, or, failing that, to arrest the disease and render it non-infectious.

***Mũthiori* (*Gonorrhoea and Bilharzia*)**

This Kikuyu name was applied to both gonorrhoea and to bilharzia, but more often to the former. The symptoms of *mũthiori* were recognised by the Kikuyu as great pain when urinating, accompanied by a discharge of white liquid and occasionally blood. People suffering from *mũthiori* were forbidden to have sexual intercourse or to sleep with other people in the same bed, but were not otherwise isolated.

The treatment for *mũthiori* was purely herbal, and it was claimed that in most cases an absolute cure could be effected. The roots of the following plants were collected: *cong'e*, *mwarĩki mwerũ*, *mũũgũ wa mũnyatĩ*, sorghum, *mũtahato* (a variety of banana), *rũũngũ*, *mũcũthi*, and *mũirũngi*. These roots were all boiled together for some hours. The water was then strained off and mixed with fresh cow's milk, and, sometimes, with a little mutton fat. The whole mixture was put into a bottle gourd and left to stand for three days, after which the patient had to drink a hornful three times a day. After taking this treatment from two to five days he began to urinate more freely and without pain, and the urine that he passed was as white as milk for two days. The urine then returned to normal and the cure was complete.

p.896

Ceremonies Connected with Diseases Classed as Mũrimũ

Before we proceed to the study of the diseases and ailments that were not classed as *mũrimũ*, it will be convenient to consider the magical and religious ceremonies that were used to combat diseases of the *mũrimũ* group. There were five distinct ceremonies which we must consider.

***The Ceremony of Kũrinda Mũrimũ* (*To Submerge the Mũrimũ*)**

The ceremony of *kũrinda mũrimũ* was used only in connection with the more severe of the epidemic diseases, namely, smallpox, and measles. It involved the symbolic expulsion of flies, a fact clearly indicating that the Kikuyu were well aware of a connection between flies and the spread of disease. Like the Kikuyu explanation of the efficacy of their smallpox vaccination process, however, their explanation of this connection was entirely unrelated to modern medical thinking, and was instead, explained in terms of spirits, which were held responsible, for the epidemic.

When one of these diseases made its appearance in any given territorial unit, the council elders of the ruling generation of that unit got together and held a conference. They usually decided that it was necessary to perform the ceremony of *kũrinda mũrimũ* (to submerge the disease).

Having come to this decision, the next step was to issue an order that any council elders in the area who had not paid the fees known as *mbũri ya rũtere* or *mbũri ya ndong'o* do so at once. When the senior elders had received these sheep and goats they used as many as they required to purchase a large stall-fed ram, or a big, well-nourished virgin ewe. Having acquired one or another of these animals, which would be needed for the sacrifice, they sent a message to a medicine-man selected for his reputation as a man skilled in the art of "submerging the disease". They requested him to come on an appointed day to take park in the ceremony in his official capacity, and to conduct the parts that could be performed only by a medicine-man.

When the medicine-man arrived, he addressed the assembled elders of the territory and instructed them each to go to his own village and (p.897) issue orders there that every single man, woman, and child in the whole territory was to catch four or five flies on his or her body. In the case of children too young, or people too old to catch flies themselves, they had to have flies caught for them, for it was regarded as essential that these should be contributed from every individual in the area concerned. The flies caught on each person then had to be wrapped up in *mũtũndũ* leaves and handed to the elders of the homestead or village.

Next day, the elders were to return to the rendezvous where the sacrificial animal was being kept in readiness, and each elder was to bring the bundles of leaves containing the flies from his village.

The medicine-man also gave orders that the married women, the unmarried girls, and the children from every village had to come to the rendezvous on this day. The women each had to bring with them a little dry sorghum flour. When everybody was ready, and all the people of the territory other than the warriors and boys, who were left to look after the homesteads, had assembled, the medicine-man overturned the saddle quern of the senior wife of the man at whose homestead the ceremony was to be performed and where everyone had assembled, and on its base carefully made two concentric rings, the outer with *ira* powder and the inner with *ũũmũ* powder, both of which he had brought to the ceremony in special gourds. Then he placed some of the sorghum flour brought by the women on the upturned saddle quern in the centre of the area enclosed by the two rings. To the flour he added *ũũmũ* powder, and then, using the tang end of an iron axe head, he stirred some freshly brewed castor oil into the flour and powder, mixing it into a stiff paste which was called *ngima*.

When the *ngima* was ready, all the women, initiated girls, and children who had come to the ceremony, filed past the stone on which the *ngima* had been mixed. As each one passed, the medicine-man used the axe tang to put a small portion of the *ngima* into the hollows of his or her hands. The woman or child ate this *ngima* and passed on. Any men present, who wished to partake of this "protective magic" might join the queue, but usually men did not do so, for men did not consider that they needed individual protection, and were willing to trust simply to the ceremony of submerging the disease, which was to follow this preliminary magic feast.

When everyone who wanted some had partaken of the *ngima*, the medicine-man turned his attention to the sacrificial animal and to the flies. A few flies were extracted from some of the bundles of leaves, and these were thrust into the rectum of the animal, together with some *ũũmũ* powder. The rectum was then closed by skewering it with a long thorn. Next, a few more flies were thrust under one eyelid of the animal, (p.898) again with the *ũũmũ* powder, and the eyelids of the eye so treated, were skewered together with another thorn.

Having thus prepared the sacrificial animal and symbolically loaded it with the flies that were the agents of the *mũrimũ*, the medicine-man produced a large tuber of the plant called *rũrika*, or a bulb

of the *gĩtoka* plant, and excavated a cavity in this tuber or bulb, which he then filled with flies and with *ũũmũ* powder, finally sealing the hole with some *mũtũndũ* leaves. The whole tuber was wrapped round with more *mũtũndũ* leaves and tied into a neat bundle with roots of the *mũriĩra* plant. Any bundles of leaves containing flies that were left over after all this had been done, were tied together and slung round the neck of the sacrificial animal.

The medicine-man then set out from the homestead leading the animal and carrying the tuber containing the flies. He was escorted by all the council elders, while the women dispersed to their own homes. The procession made its way to the southern boundary of the territorial unit. The boundary having been reached, a tree belonging to one of the species connected with sacrificial rites, such as a *mũgumo*, *mũthakwa*, or *mũkũyũ*, was selected—though it could not be a tree that was actually used for sacrifices—and at the foot of the tree the animal was slaughtered by suffocation.

After it had been skinned and cut up, one of the elders, under the direction of the medicine-man, cut away the upper portion of the skull together with the upper part of the face including the eyes. The medicine-man then put the flies from the bundle round the animal's neck, and some more *ũũmũ* powder into the brain cavity. The eye that had not been skewered before the animal's death was now treated as the other had been. The top of the skull was then fitted back into the rest of the head and the whole was wrapped up in the *rũambũ*, the fatty, membranous lining of the abdominal cavity. This bundle was then wrapped in *mũtũndũ* leaves and tied with *mũriĩra* roots in the same way as the tuber of the *rũrika* plant had been treated. The medicine-man and the most senior elders present, then took the two bundles—one with the head and one with the *rũrika* tuber—and, escorted by the senior elders who had eaten the meat, crossed the boundary into the territory of the neighbouring section of the community.

Here the party proceeded very secretly, until, at last, they located a *mũtũndũ* tree. Then, taking care that they were not observed, they buried the two bundles at the foot of the tree while the medicine-man said in a loud voice, "*Twarinda mũrimũ ũthire bũrũri*" (We submerge the disease that it may cease to be in the land). If by any chance the people of the territory in which the disease was buried saw what happened, (p.899) they came later, dug the bundles up, and carried them beyond their southern boundary. Usually, however, care was taken that the proceedings were not seen.

In each territory affected by the epidemic this whole ceremony was performed. The bundles containing the flies were carried to the southern boundary, so that eventually the southernmost territory was reached and the last two bundles were carried over into Maasai country.

The performance of the ceremony of *kũrinda mũrimũ* did not necessarily start at the northernmost part of South Kikuyu. It started wherever the outbreak of the disease became severe, but the carrying of the bundles always had to be towards the south.

The Ceremony of Kũrigĩrĩria Mũrimũ (*To put up Barriers against the Mũrimũ*)

If an outbreak of any of the diseases classed as *mũrimũ* started but did not assume the proportions of an epidemic, the elders got together and consulted a seer to find out what should be done. It might be that he would not advise the performance of the ceremony of *kũrigĩrĩria mũrimũ*, but in most cases he did. This ceremony was seldom performed for an area bigger than that comprising a *mwaki*, a fire-linked group of villages comprising part of a territorial unit, though sometimes it was performed for a whole territorial unit. It was not only performed when some *mũrimũ* attacked

the human population of the division, but it was also used to arrest the spread of cattle and stock diseases, or insect plagues. Since, however, the ceremony was most commonly employed in connection with a *mũrimũ*, it is convenient to consider it in this chapter.

If the diviner who had been consulted advised performance of the ceremony of *kũrigĩrĩria mũrimũ*, the elders concerned, fixed a day for the ceremony, and on that day met at the homestead of one of their number. Here they were joined by a medicine-man, whom they had invited to come and conduct the magical part of the proceedings. Every elder brought with him withies of *mũrigono* and roots of the *mũriĩra* creeper, together with a large bunch of *mahoroha* leaves, and the medicine-man brought his entire magical outfit. When all was ready, the party made its way to the sacred tree of the territorial division (*mwaki*). They took with them an all white or all black ram for the sacrifice, together with a little honey and a stick of sugar-cane. Having arrived at the sacred tree, one elder was despatched to the nearest stream to fetch water, which (p.900) might not be carried in any man-made vessel, but only in a banana leaf or in an edible arum leaf. When the water had been brought, the senior elders took hold of the ram, and, holding it facing Mt. Kenya prayed to God to bless the ceremony which was about to be performed

This done, the animal was slaughtered by some of the elders, and when it had been skinned and cut up in the correct manner (see Chapter 7), the skin was laid on the ground with the flesh side upwards The medicine-man then mixed the water and honey and added to this the sugar-cane juice, which he obtained by chewing the stick of sugar-cane and spitting.out the juice. Next he added all the stomach contents of the ram and a little of each of the following magic powders: *ikũnja*, *ũũmũ*, *rũthuko*, *njeehũ*, and *mũcanjamũka*. When all these ingredients had been thoroughly mixed together, they were emptied into the skin of the ram and rubbed well into it.

While the medicine-man had been thus engaged, each elder had been instructed to make several miniature hurdlework doors (*mariigĩ*) using the *mũrigono* withies and *mũriĩra* roots. When these were ready, they were all anointed with a portion of the mixture that had been laid on the ram skin. The bunches of *mahoroha* leaves that each elder had brought were also well rubbed over with the same mixture. At this stage, the bunches of leaves and the miniature doors were piled on to the skin and left there while some of the elders proceeded to roast the meat of the sacrificial animal, and while all present partook of the sacrificial feast. The whole of the meat was not eaten, but a part, including the breast, was placed at the foot of the tree as an offering to God.

After the feast was over, the skin of the ram was cut into strips, and each elder present was given one of these. Each also took his bunch of *mahoroha* leaves and two of the miniature doors. The remaining doors were given to two or three of the elders present, who were instructed to set them up at all the points where pathways entered their division (*mwaki*) of the territorial unit.

The assembled party then broke up, and each elder went to his own homestead, taking with him the objects enumerated above. He disposed of these as follows. One of the miniature doors was put on the ground in the middle of the main entrance to his homestead, the other was suspended above the entrance, together with the bunch of *mahoroha* leaves, and the strip of hide. Thus any person who entered or left the homestead had to pass over one of these doors and under the other, and under the leaves and strip of skin. Moreover, any stranger entering the area had to cross or pass by one of the doors set up at every point of entry into the area.

p.901

By these magical means the Kikuyu believed that a disease could be prevented from spreading within the area of the *mwaki*, and that if it went out of the area it would be harmless and could not affect other areas.

The Ceremony of Kũhĩtũkania Mbũri (*To Cause Goats to Pass One Another*)

Like the ceremony which has just been described, the ceremony of *kũhĩtũkania mbũri* was used not only when some epidemic threatened a territorial unit, but also when other calamities threatened the population of that territory as a whole. It will be convenient, however, to consider this ceremony here, remembering always that it was also employed in connection with stock diseases, insect plagues, and even sometimes in cases of rainfall shortage, or persistent Maasai raids. This ceremony, moreover, like the last, was never carried out unless it had been specifically ordered by a seer or diviner after he had been consulted by the elders of the territory concerned.

The ceremony of *kũhĩtũkania mbũri* was never carried out unless the whole of a territorial unit (*rũgongo*) was affected, and unless a delegation consisting of elders representing all parts of that territorial unit had consulted a medicine-man as to the cause of the trouble.

If the medicine-man who had been consulted found, after consulting his divining gourd, that the trouble was due to God's anger, he addressed the delegation, telling them that God was angry because the population of the territory had become subdivided into too many small units, each making their own sacrifices and prayers at their own tree, and never joining with the elders of the other divisions within the territory for communal worship. The way to arrest God's anger and get him to remove the *mũrimũ* that was killing the people was to perform the ceremony of *kũhĩtũkania mbũri* as soon as possible, thereby showing the unity of the territory as a whole.

The ceremony was a religious and not a magical one, even though performed under the instructions of a dealer in magic. After consulting the medicine-man and hearing his decision, the elders who represented the different parts of the territory appointed a day for the ceremony, then went to their respective homes. Each territory was divided into a western part (*mwena wa ithũĩro*) and an eastern part (*mwena wa irathĩro*), and the elders of each of these parts selected four senior elders (p.902) to act as their representatives for the ceremony. Each of the four in each half had to belong to a different division (*mwaki*) of the territorial unit so that the delegation was as representative as possible. On the day appointed for the ceremony, the four elders of the eastern half of the territory took a virgin ewe which had been provided by the community and, starting early in the morning, travelled westwards up the length of the ridge taking the ewe with them.

Note:
The writer calls the west *rũgũrũ* thus western part *mwena wa rũgũrũ* which correctly should be *mwena wa ithũĩro*. The east he calls *itherero* instead of *irathĩro* and thus *mwena wa itherero* instead of *mwena wa irathĩro*. *Rũgũrũ* is north and *itherero* is south.

On the same morning, the western delegates took a ram and travelled eastwards down the ridge. On their respective journeys, which were along a main pathway, the delegations passed each other and exchanged greetings. When the members of each party had reached a point beyond the farthest limit of cultivation on the ridge, they proceeded to sacrifice the animal they had brought with them, as an offering to God. Before the animal was killed, it was held up on its hind legs facing each of the four Kikuyu sacred mountains in turn, and a prayer was offered to God as they faced each mountain. They prayed in particular for mercy and forgiveness, asking for relief from the disease and the blessing of the deity on the ceremony of sacrifice.

The animal was then slaughtered and its blood caught in a gourd. This they poured out to God, facing each of the four sacred mountains in turn, at the same time saying further prayers. Then the meat of the animal was roasted, after the stomach contents had been laid on one side in *mũthakwa* leaves. The fat of the animal was rendered down, and a part of this was also poured out to God, with further prayers. The four elders spent the night at a homestead near the place of sacrifice, and the next morning took the stomach contents of the ram or ewe (as the case might be) still wrapped in *mũthakwa* leaves, and proceeded to retrace their steps back to their own half of the territory. As they went, they had to sprinkle some of the stomach contents along the path at intervals.

Somewhere along the path they met the other four elders and exchanged information as to the exact position of the place where each party had made the sacrifice. The members of each party then had to go right to the spot where the other party had performed the sacrifice, and sprinkle the last remaining portion of the stomach contents they were carrying, on the ashes of the sacrificial fires of the previous day.

By their prayers, and by the fact that elders of one half of the territory had made sacrifices at the extreme limit of the other half, they had shown the deity that they were re-united, and he would forgive them and speedily remove the evil that was affecting the people.

p.903

The Ceremony of Kũingata Mũrimũ (*To Drive Out the Mũrimũ*)

Kũingata mũrimũ means literally, "to drive out the *mũrimũ*, and this ceremony of getting rid of the evil spirits of a disease is probably older than any other of the three which we have described. It is more than likely that it dates back to a period before God was worshipped, when animistic beliefs were a much more dominant feature of Kikuyu life.

In South Kikuyu, by the end of the nineteenth century, this ceremony had deteriorated into a custom in which the elders and leaders of tribal life had little belief, but which they allowed to continue, because the women, who were much more conservative, wished to use it. The elders, as we have seen, had come to believe that all types of *mũrimũ* were controlled by the deity, and they had therefore instituted a variety of ceremonies such as those already described, each of which involved a request to the deity that he assist in getting rid of the infection. The ceremony of *kũingata mũrimũ* was not an appeal to the deity, and thus was not controlled or ordered by the elders, but was always undertaken on the initiative of the women themselves, and only women, girls, and uninitiated boys took part.

Occasionally the women enlisted the help of the warriors of their territory to make preliminary arrangements and to make sure that the women of the whole territory were aware that a day had been appointed for the ceremony, but otherwise adult males had nothing whatever to do with this ceremony. (This was not true of certain parts of North Kikuyu). When the plans were being made for the drive, enquiries were made to find out which was the farthermost ridge in the interior of South Kikuyu that the epidemic had reached. A day was then fixed for the drive to start from that point and move towards the south. If the epidemic had reached as far as the Chania River, the drive started there.

On the day chosen, all the women and children of the ridge where the drive was to start held themselves in readiness. As soon as all the goats and sheep had been brought home for the night and evening was approaching, they started from the northern side of their territory and marched right across to the stream which was the boundary between their territory and the next. They

advanced in a long line, and as the whole territory was involved, the march started simultaneously along its entire frontier, making a line of anything up to 30 miles.

Every woman and child carried a wooden club, a stick of firewood (p.904) or a staff, and most of them also had fire-brands. No metal weapon of any kind might be carried. In addition, many of them carried the wooden board (*kihengere*) that was used to close the entrance to a granary, and they beat on these with their sticks and clubs. They shouted at the top of their voices, and the whole line advanced making as much noise as they possibly could. As they approached the stream which was the boundary between their territory and the next to the south, the women and children of the next territory came down to the stream on their side to meet them. The advancing line reached the stream or river and drove the *mũrimũ* (epidemic) across, at the same time throwing all their sticks and clubs across the river.

The people of the next ridge then took up the drive, and proceeded to drive the spirits right across the ridge till they reached their southern boundary. There they were met by the people of the next ridge, and so on. Having started at dusk, the drive was continued until about midnight, by which time a number of ridges had been "cleared".

Next evening the drive was taken up at the point where it had been left off, and so on, until finally the *mũrimũ* spirits were driven out of Kikuyu country and into Maasai country. The women believed that after such a drive no new cases of disease would break out, and if they did it proved that along some part of the line the beaters had been careless, and had let the *mũrimũ* break back.

Territorial Sacrifice for Deliverance from Disease

The sacrifice for deliverance from disease or cattle plague was quite distinct from the above mentioned ceremonies, and it took place only if all other methods had failed. It was not a semi-magical, semi- religious ceremony to prevent the spread of disease, but was a sacrifice of supplication to implore the deity to intervene and have mercy.

The ceremony was organised by the leaders of the ruling generation, and honey beer was used as well as the sacrifice of a beast. The leaders selected eight of their number to officiate for the occasion with the man at whose home the honey beer had been brewed. The sacrifice started in the afternoon, and the ram and the beer were taken to the sacred tree. The ram was first offered alive to the deity by the nine elders, facing each of the four sacred mountains in turn, and then it was slaughtered. The details of procedure were the same as those for the dedication sacrifice described in Chapter 25, but the prayers were (p.905)

different and referred to the occasion, that is, they were prayers for mercy and deliverance. When the sacrifice was over, the litany given at the end of Chapter 6 in connection with the sacrifice for rain was repeated, but it was preceded by an additional verse as follows:

Tondũ tũũkire kũhoya mũrimũ ũhorere,	Because we have come to pray that the disease may abate,
Ugai, mũrimũ ũrohorera, na ũthame.	Say (ye), let the disease abate and move away.

This was followed by the response:

Thaai Thathaiya Ngai, thaai!	Mercy! Pray to God for mercy, mercy!

Illness Due to Natural Causes

The Kikuyu stem meaning to be ill is *-rũara*, and from this stem there is a noun *ndwari* which denotes a disease, sickness, or other form of ill health that is not a *mũrimũ*. The greater number of *ndwari* were considered to be natural and not due to any supernatural intervention, although most

of the natural *ndwari* could be inflicted upon a person through the agency of an angry departed spirit. In the case of the vast majority of *ndwari*, the Kikuyu had one or more herbal remedies, and some magical practices that were occasionally employed in connection with certain maladies such as sciatica.

According to the general Kikuyu conception, if a disease or ailment other than a *mũrimũ* responded to the use of the recognised treatments, then its origin was natural, but if it failed to respond, then in all probability the ailment had been inflicted by an angry ancestral spirit, was due to witchcraft (*ũrogi*) employed by a living enemy, or was the result of breaking some tribal law or custom. In such cases, the friends of the patient had to consult a seer or diviner and get him to discover the cause of the trouble, so that it might be duly removed by sacrifice, purification, or other magical or ceremonial means.

Whereas the herbal remedies for more ordinary complaints were more or less universally known and might be compared to the household remedies which Europeans keep in their medicine cupboards, there were other herbal remedies which were not commonly known and which had to be obtained from special herbalists, who were usually (p.906) also seers and workers in magic. Some herbalists had special remedies which they guarded most jealously, charging high fees to any who wished to be cured. However, this was generally only true of treatments for the less common complaints, such as diabetes.

Normally, if a person did not know what herbal remedy he should take for his particular complaint, he did not go straight to a herbalist but rather consulted the elders of his village. Usually he found someone who knew what remedy was needed. Only in the last recourse was the professional herbalist consulted.

I propose to give a fairly detailed description of some of the herbal remedies used by the Kikuyu for their various complaints. Being conscious of the fact that not a few of the drugs now used by medical science the world over, were originally primitive herbal remedies— quinine and Emetine are two examples—I believe that there is a reasonable chance that a few of the herbal remedies of the Kikuyu may also prove worthy of investigation. It is my hope that by giving as many details as I can, some person who is qualified to do analytical and experimental work on them may decide to investigate the potentialities of these remedies. This tribal knowledge was, after all, acquired over a period of centuries by a system of trial and error, and it is unlikely that the remedies that were the equivalent of European household cures were all of mythical value. Some at least, were of proven efficiency, while others were probably only palliatives and not cures.

***Gatema* (*Dysentery*)**

The Kikuyu did not distinguish between the two types of dysentery known to science, but called them both *gatema* pr alternatively *kũharũo thakame* (to excrete bloody diarrhoea). Several new herbal remedies for this complaint came into common use after 1900, but here we are only concerned with those which were in general use during the latter part of last century. Four treatments were known.

Treatment A

The roots of the small-leaved variety of the creeper known as *mũriĩra* (not the large-leaved variety which was used in so many magical (p.907)

cremonies) were dug up along with roots of the plant called ***gakarakũ k****airũ***.** These two varieties of root were pounded to a pulp in about equal **qu*antities, and boiled in water*** for sev**eral hours.**

The water was then allowed to cool with the pulp still in it, after which it was drained off. The patient was given a small half-gourdful of this brew to drink at intervals during the day, and in a few days he was said to recover. The patient was not allowed any food except gruel.

Treatment B

Leaves of the cultivated variety of the plant known as *ihũithia rĩerũ* were placed in a pot over the fire without any water. As they got hot, a clear liquid exuded from them. This juice was strained off, mixed with fresh cow's milk, and drunk twice daily. The only nourishment allowed to the patient undergoing this treatment was sugar-cane juice from the variety of sugar-cane known as *nyakamwerũ*.

Treatment C

The bark of the tree known as *mũthĩga* was collected, and after being beaten to a pulp was boiled for a short time in water. The water was then strained off and given to the patient to drink. The juice of this bark was a strong astringent, and it was said that in cases of severe loss of blood from dysentery this treatment stopped the flow. It was sometimes used as a preliminary treatment, being followed by either A or B.

*Treatment **D***

This treatment was not a herbal one and was more in the nature of sympathetic magic. It consisted of slaughtering a goat or a sheep, and cutting out the lungs. These were then boiled until they had shrunk to a hard mass. The patient was given these to eat together with a roast green banana of the *mũnjũũ* variety, and some thick porridge of the type known as *ngima*, made from flour of the sorghum known as *mũhĩa mwerũ* (white sorghum). These foods were believed to make people constipated, hence their sympathetic use in cases of dysentery.

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***Rũharo* (*Diarrhoea*)**

We will consider first the diarrhoea treatments used for adults and then those for small children. Before considering actual remedies it must be noted that if diarrhoea was not very severe, no herbal remedy was taken, but the sufferer went on a temporary diet of milk, *mũcuuru* bananas roasted in their skins, and *njahĩ* beans, which were soaked until their skins came off and then boiled and mashed (not cooked in their skins as they were for ordinary food purposes). Sugar-cane juice of the variety known as *nyakamwerũ* was also believed to be helpful.

Treatment A

If the diarrhoea was severe and could not be treated simply by dieting, the patient was given a drink made from raw blood drawn from an ox by means of a bleeding arrow (see Chapter 8), honey, and some soda.

Treatment B

If the diarrhoea was severe and prolonged and if it was accompanied by pain and a feeling of sickness, the following herbal remedy was regarded as a standard cure. Roots of the small creeper known as *gĩkunguĩ* (wild cucumber) were dug up, crushed to a pulp, soaked in water, and then boiled in it with a few leaves of the plants known as *mũthakwa wa aathi* and *mũciĩ mwerũ*. When the water in which these three ingredients had been boiled was cool, the sick person was given a small half-gourdful to drink. This portion acted as a violent emetic, and the person immediately

started vomiting, and shortly afterwards was also violently purged. After about six hours the patient had to be given water in which crushed *mũiri* bark had been soaked but not boiled. This acted as a counter-irritant and the purging ceased.

Treatment C

Infants suffering from diarrhoea could not be given these rather violent drugs, and for infantile diarrhoea the mother had to chew roots of the plant called *gathararia-ita* and put the resultant juice into a little (p.909) water, which was then given to the baby to drink. This plant was good for curing stomach-ache, as well as diarrhoea, in babies.

Treatment D

For children and infants suffering from severe diarrhoea, the roots of the plant called **klrago** were similarly chewed and the juice mixed with water. This acted as a mild purge which was in turn followed by a cessation of the trouble.

***Ndangũrũ* (*Tape-worm Infection*)**

This word was also used to some extent for other types of intestinal parasites. A large number of different remedies were used, of which the following were the best known and most widely used.

Treatment A

A small handful of dry berries of the *mũgaita* tree (almost every Kikuyu household used to keep a supply of these handy) were crushed on the saddle quern, then soaked in milk, and left to stand overnight. The sufferer, meanwhile, had to refrain from eating his or her evening meal, as it was important that the dose be taken on a completely empty stomach if it was to kill the parasites. Next morning, a full dose was taken and the patient then had to lie down. After an hour or two he was violently purged and the worms were expelled completely. If berries of the *mũgaita* tree were unavailable, those of the shrub also called *mũgaita* were used, but these were much less effective and often failed to effect a complete cure.

Treatment B

The he bark of the plant called *mũgũta* was regarded as the best of all remedies for tape-worm, but this plant did not grow in Kikuyu country and as far as people knew could be obtained only from the region of Lake Magadi in Maasai country. The soda miners, when they returned from getting soda, always brought a quantity of this bark back with (p.910) them, and sold it to those who needed it. The bark was dried and ground to a powder, a small handful of which was mixed with either fresh milk or *kĩmere* gruel made from foxtail millet grain. The milk or gruel with the powder in it was left to stand overnight and taken next morning on an empty stomach. It was a much more effective cure than *ngaita* berries and never failed to remove the tape-worms completely.

Treatment C

Many Kikuyu herbalists asserted that whereas *ngaita* berries alone were not a certain cure, they were very efficacious if mixed with an extract of *mũcarage* bark. The *ngaita* berries were powdered and mixed with water in which *mũcarage* bark had been boiled, and the mixture was taken on an empty stomach. This was a violent purge and it was essential to follow it within a few hours with a dose of water in which *mũiri* bark had been soaked (see treatment B for diarrhoea), as otherwise the stomach lining would suffer from the severity of the *mũcarage* drug.

Treatment D

Yet another treatment of tape-worm consisted of taking a small quantity of *thũcũnai* bark and bruising it with a stick, after which it was boiled in water. The water was then drained off and taken on an empty stomach. This was such a violent purge, and its effect was so speedy, that the patient might never drink it in the homestead, but had to take the dose with him out into the bush, for within two minutes of taking it he would be violently purged. Moreover, this drug was so potent that it was considered essential that it be followed immediately by the consumption of a hornful of liquid fat, or else oil, because otherwise the stomach lining would be damaged. If too large a dose was taken, *thũcũnai* was poisonous and caused death. Besides being used to expel tape-worm in serious cases, it was also used in severe cases of constipation (see below). However, it was dangerous, and most people preferred not to use it for fear of taking an overdose by mistake.

Treatment E

Some herbalists recommended the roots of *mũbarabaria* for tape-worm· These were chewed raw and the juice swallowed.

p.911

***Kũũmĩrũo nĩ Nda* (*Constipation*)**

Treatment A

In cases of mild constipation requiring a gentle laxative, the sufferer took a little bark of the *mũkũrũe* tree, together with a little bark of the *mũgumo*, bruised these with a stick, and boiled them in water. When the water was cool enough to drink, but still fairly hot, it was swallowed. This acted as a laxative so mild that it did not inconvenience the sufferer, but relieved the constipation.

Treatment B

Another laxative of mild character, but not quite so mild as the above, was made by squeezing the berries of the *mũkambura* to a pulp in water, and allowing the water to stand for about 24 hours before being strained off. A hornful of this caused the bowels to work freely.

Treatment C

Severe and prolonged constipation of the type that caused fever had to be treated violently in one treatment. One method was to use *thũcũnai* bark extract as described in treatment D for tape-worm infection.

Treatment D

If constipation was very severe and lasted without relief for many days, and if *thũcũnai* bark could not be obtained, a single leaf of the *mũhoko* plant was bruised and soaked in water, and the water given to the patient to drink. This was a violent poison and drastic purge, but provided only one leaf was used it was regarded as safe. Some people, however, could not even stand the amount of poison contained in a single leaf. As a purge, *mũhoko* was used only in extreme cases, and a dose of it had to be followed by a dose of liquid fat, oil, or honey to soothe the stomach and mitigate the after effects of the poison.

p.912

***Mahĩndĩ* (*Rheumatism*)**

This word means literally, bones, and when a Kikuyu said, "*Ndĩ mũrũaru mahĩndĩ*" (I am ill as to the bones), he meant that he was suffering from rheumatism, and more especially, pains in the lumbar region of the back. Occasionally the word *mũrimũ* was used loosely with the word *mahĩndĩ*

to denote rheumatism, but all old Kikuyus that I consulted, agreed that this complaint was not really a *mũrimũ* at all. Four distinct treatments for rheumatism were recognised.

Treatment A

The commonest remedy was as follows. The roots of the following plants were boiled together in a large quantity of water: *mũirũngi*, *mũcũthĩ*, *mũkarakinga*, *mũcege*, and the *njahĩ* bean. Some very immature bananas (in the *gĩcii* stage—unripe), which had been peeled and dried in the sun, were also boiled with these. Then, a little finger millet flour and a little honey were added. The whole brew was allowed to stand for two or three days in a warm place until slightly fermented, after which it was strained off into gourds. Then one hornful was drunk three times a day for from three to five days. About the third day the urine turned milk-white; by the fifth day it had returned to normal and the rheumatic pains ceased completely. It will be noted that this treatment was similar to that for gonorrhoea and bilharzia (*mũthiori*), and that in both cases the treatment turned the urine white for a few days, thus apparently removing impurities, presumably acids, from the system.

Treatment B

Sometimes a person suffering from pains in the back did not respond at all to treatment A, in which case it was held that he or she was suffering from a different form of the complaint (possibly not rheumatism at all); and the following treatment was then given. The roots of the following three plants were collected: *ndibai*, *mũtũmbũrũ*, and *nyeki ya kĩgombe*. These were all boiled together and the water was strained off. A hornful was drunk three times a day for several days, by which time the pain ceased and the patient recovered.

p.913
*Treatment **C***

For people suffering from only slight attacks, a tonic was made by boiling the roots of the following three plants: *mũrangarĩ*, *mũkarakinga*, *mahĩndahĩndĩ*, and some bits of the stem of *mũteta*. This tonic was used for general debility as well as to drive away mild rheumatic attacks and general back pains.

Treatment D

Some herbal specialists claimed that rheumatic pains could be dispelled by taking a potion made of the boiled roots of *mũbũthĩ* and *mũirũngi*, which were both ingredients of treatment A, but others insisted that the other ingredients listed under A were also essential.

***Kĩhuti* (*Feverish Colds, Ordinary Colds and Hay Fever*)**

Hay fever was particularly prevalent when the maize was in flower, and the Kikuyu recognised that there was some connection between the flowering maize and their suffering from this form of *kĩhuti*. They also considered that *kĩhuti* was commonly the result of drinking water from rivers and streams in territorial areas other than the one where they had been brought up. The following three treatments were used, the first being the most well known.

Treatment A

The roots of *mũrũrũwe* and *mũgũcwa* were boiled with some bark of the *mũkindũri* tree in a large pot of water. When the water boiled, the pot taken off and the patient sat with his head over the mouth of the pot and inhaled the steam. When he had finished inhaling and the water had cooled, it was strained off and used either to make a gruel for the patient with sorghum flour, or else mixed

with fresh blood drawn from one or two ewes by bleeding. This blood and the water in which the herbs were boiled was drunk by the patient every day until he was well.

p.914
Treatment B

The leaves and bark of *mwathathia* and *mũcagatha* were boiled, and the patient inhaled the steam from them as in treatment A, but afterwards the water in which these leaves had been boiled was thrown away and not used to make gruel or some other drink, as it was very poisonous.

Treatment C

In addition to the above herbal treatments, the Kikuyu commonly let a little of the blood of a person suffering from a severe cold as this was said to ease the headaches that accompanied it.

***Rũhayo* (*Severe Chest Cold, but not Bronchitis*)**

Treatment A

The roots of *mũigoya* and *mũimba-igũrũ* and the bark of the roots of *mũringa* were all boiled together. The water in which they were boiled was used to make a thin gruel of sorghum flour, and to this was added papyrus salt. This gruel was then given at intervals to the patient, a small half-gourdful at a time (about a breakfast cupful). Too large a quantity would cause vomiting.

Treatment B

Some bark of the roots of the *mũringa* tree was boiled, together with the roots of *mũkeũ*, *mũgere*, and *mũthengera*. The water was then used to make a gruel as in treatment A.

***Gũkorora* (*Cough*)**

This term was used for a simple cough and for ulcerated throat resulting in fits of coughing. The most usual palliative was to chew a little of the (p.915)

bark of *mũringa* tree root. This had a soothing effect, and relieved inflammation. Alternatively, a person suffering from sore throat took a little honey mixed with blood from the heart of an animal slaughtered for the purpose. A small quantity of this mixture was sucked as Europeans suck lozenges.

***Kũrũara Maitho* (*To be Ill as to the Eyes*)**

The Kikuyu used this term for any eye complaint such as bloodshot eyes or conjunctivitis. There were many different eye treatments, the more important being the following.

Treatment A

The buds and young flowers of the plant called *mũcege* were crushed with a little water so that the juice mixed with the water. This water was then dropped in small drops into the affected eyes and had a remarkable soothing and healing effect. This treatment was the most commonly used for simple inflammation and for eye-ache.

Treatment B

The leaves and stems of the plant called *mũrumbae* were boiled in a small pot. When the water was boiling, the pot was taken off the fire and the eyes held open in the steam so that the *mũrumbae* vapour filled them.

*Treatment **C***

The leaves of the plant called *mũkũnyi* were boiled and used as in treatment B.

Treatment D

The leaves of the plant called *ng'ondu ya kĩondo* were boiled and the eyes (p.916) steamed as in treatments B and C, or else juice from very fresh leaves of this plant was squeezed directly into the inflamed eyes. This caused acute pain temporarily, but within 48 hours the eyes, even if they had been very badly inflamed, were quite cured. This treatment was the one most commonly used in cases of serious inflammation.

Treatment E

The leaves of an unidentified plant, used today for dyeing cloth and known to contain vitamin A, were crushed and put into water, which immediately became a deep orange colour. The eyes were bathed with this liquid and a few drops put right under the lids. This treatment was said to be very effective, but in many parts of Kikuyu country the plant was hard to find.

Treatment F

From a stem of the plant called *ndũrutua* a section was cut that had no knots in it. Between the knots the stem is hollow, and contains a plain, clear liquid. This liquid was gently blown out of the stem into the inflamed eyes. A good many of the professional Kikuyu herbalists said that this was the most effective of all eye remedies, even surpassing the juice of *ng'onduya kĩondo*.

In addition to the above, the following three non-herbal remedies were sometimes employed.

Treatment G

Blood was taken from the ear of a new-born kid or lamb, by cutting the top of the ear with a knife. Some of this was dropped into the inflamed eyes, thus soothing them and helping them to heal.

Treatment H

While the blood of a lamb or kid could be used for the eyes of adults, the eyes of young children were treated with a few drops of their own by making a very slight cut in the eyebrow region and letting the blood (p.917) trickle down into the inflamed eyes. Blood from the eyebrow of a man who had killed a leopard was also said to be good, but not the blood of any other adult.

Treatment I

Water from dew and raindrops that had collected on the flowers of the grass known as *gakinya-njĩgĩ, kaiga-mbura,* or *kaiga-ime* was also sometimes used to wash out the sore eyes of small babies. Stream water was said to be injurious, and probably was infected, as many people washed in it. Rain water from grass was the purest water available.

***Njiika* (*Suppurating Ear*)**

Frequently, Kikuyu children, and sometimes adults, suffered from suppurating ear.

Treatment A

A few feathers of the bird called *ngũgũ* (Hartlamb's turaco, a plantain eater) were charred, mixed with a little castor oil, and rubbed on the end of another fresh *ngũgũ* feather. This was put into the ear and twisted round so as to anoint the interior of the ear with castor oil and charred feather.

Treatment B

A little rain water from a hollow in a decayed tree was used to wash out the ear.

Treatment C

A little mutton fat was melted down, and when it was warm and liquid, (p.918) poured into the ear. After it had been left in for a few minutes it was brushed out with a feather.

***Nunuho* (*Nose Bleed*)**

Nose bleeding was treated only by means of magical ceremonies performed by a medicine-man.

***Kũrĩo nĩ Magego* (*To be Eaten by the Teeth: Toothache*)**

The Kikuyu believed that the best way to treat an aching tooth was to extract it, and this will be dealt with later in this chapter under "Surgery". Apart from this, several herbal treatments for toothache were used.

Treatment A

The roots of the plant called *mũgũcwa* were chewed and the juice retained in the mouth as long as possible. This stopped the aching of an exposed nerve almost immediately, and was also beneficial for a tooth that had an abcess, or for bleeding gums, sore gums, or loose teeth due to receding and diseased gums.

Treatment B

The roots of the plant called *mũkinyai* were chewed and the juice retained in the mouth. This was only effective for teeth that were aching due to an exposed nerve.

Treatment C

If the gums were swollen due to an abscess, the root of the small variety of *ndabibi* (clover) was chewed. The juice soothed the pain and the gums were less swollen in a few hours.

p.919
Treatment D

The leaves of the plant called *mũkũri* were chewed and the juice retained in the mouth as long as possible. This was repeated several times. The treatment, like Treatment A, was said to be beneficial for almost any type of toothache or gum trouble.

Treatment E

If a *mũkũyũ* tree was bruised with a knife or club a thick white milky juice was exuded and this was said to be good for stopping the ache of a tooth with an exposed nerve. The juice, on exposure to air, hardens. Apparently the virtue of this treatment lay in the fact that the *mũkũyũ* juice filled the cavity and protected the exposed nerve from the cold air, and from hot or cold foods.

***Kũrĩo nĩ Mũtwe* (*To be Eaten by One's Head: Headache*)**

Treatment A

Nearly every Kikuyu household kept a supply of dried *irigi* root. A person suffering from a headache lit a piece of this root at one end, and inhaled the smoke much as we smoke a cigarette. This was the most widely used remedy and was said to be very effective.

Treatment B

The roots of the creeper called *mũgaya-ng'ũndũ*, when freshly cut, emit a very strong smell, which was inhaled as a common treatment for headache. The immediate result was to cause violent sneezing, but this was accompanied by considerable relief from the headache.

*Treatment **C***

This was a non-herbal remedy, and consisted of bleeding to reduce blood pressure. Blood letting for this purpose was carried out in one of (p.920) two ways: either by cupping with a small bleeding horn, or else by cutting an incision in the forehead just above the root of the nose whereupon a quantity of blood spurted out.

***Bũra* (*Neuralgia Across the Forehead and Behind the Eyes*)**

This complaint was not treated herbally, but by means of a faith cure. Certain people were said to possess the power to *huura*, or blow away the pain, and if the patient had faith he could always be cured.

***Mũrimũ wa Ihiga* (*Carbuncles*)**

Although called loosely "the *mũrimũ* of the stone", this complaint was not really ranked as a *mũrimũ*, but as an *ndwari*. The symptoms were great swellings like tumours on various parts of the body, which formed without any visible cause. There was only one herbal treatment.

The roots of the plant called *kamũkenye* were boiled and the water in which they had been boiled was drunk by the sufferer at intervals. At the same time, an external treatment was applied. Powder made by grinding the charred stems of *kamũkenye* with charred leaves and stems of *ihũthia* (dodder) and *rũrura* was mixed with castor oil and applied to the swellings. These burst in a few days and much pus came out. The patient then recovered and the fever stopped unless the cause of the complaint was his having inadvertently broken some taboo. If this was the case, he did not get well and the wounds remained sore until he called in a medicine-man to diagnose (by divining) what was the cause of his suffering. When amends had been made, he recovered.

***Mahũha* (*Boils*)**

Boils were common among the Kikuyu, and there was a standard treatment for them. Leaves of one of the species of *rũrura* were collected and chewed to a pulp, which was placed over the incipient boil. This acted as a kind of fomentation with a strong drawing action, and the boils rapidly came to a head and burst, whereupon the core (*kĩga*) was removed, and the wound washed out with a little warm mutton fat.

p.921

***Mbatata* (*Warts*)**

Treatment A

The juice of young stems of the plant called *gĩthũnga* was expressed on to the warts twice a day for several days. This caused them to dry up and disappear.

Treatment B

The ends of several branches of the tree called *mũtũndũ* were placed in a fire. In a short time the sap started to froth out at the other end. This sap was applied to the warts repeatedly for several days, whereupon the warts dried up and disappeared.

Treatment C

A yam plant vine was cut, and the juice that exuded was rubbed on the warts. This burned them and caused them to dry up in a few days. (Yam juice was also used to burn the skin in tattooing.)

Treatment D

Many professional herbalists kept a special powder called *ya kĩhuno*, and would not divulge the secret of its preparation. This was mixed with a little oil or fat, and warts that were severe and had failed to respond to other treatments were anointed with the mixture. Usually a cure was effected.

***Ũhere* (*Scabies*)**

Scabies was a prevalent skin disease among the Kikuyu, and caused severe itching and a rash. A large variety of treatments for *ũhere* were known, of which the most effective were:

p.922
Treatment A

The whole of several plants of the species called *mũhũa* were collected, care being taken to get roots, stem, and leaves. The leaves were rubbed all over the affected parts of the body to get the juice well into the skin. This done, the stems and roots were put into a large bit of potsherd, and placed over the fire until they were completely charred. These charred remains were pounded to a fine powder, mixed with castor oil, and used as an ointment on the affected parts of the skin.

Treatment B

A few leaves of the cultivated variety of *ihũithia rĩerũ* were heated slightly over the fire and their juice rubbed well into the affected skin. This speedily soothed the irritation, and if repeated several times a day effected a cure.

Treatment C

The stems of the plant called *ihũthia* (which must not be confused with *ihũithia*), were charred in a potsherd and then ground to a powder, mixed to a paste with castor oil, and applied to the affected parts. This was repeated for several days and the skin disease disappeared rapidly.

Treatment D

If the disease was very bad, a more drastic treatment was needed. The affected parts first had to be rubbed with leaves of the *mũcatha* plant, which had a bitter juice that caused the rash to sting very badly. Then an ointment, made by mixing charred *mũhũa* (see treatment A) with charred rhinoceros skin and castor oil was rubbed in.

Treatment E

Some roots of the plant called *kĩgagatio* were bruised with a club until juice exuded. This was rubbed into all the affected parts and smarted considerably, but several applications of this treatment effected a cure.

p.923
Treatment F

If hippopotamus fat was available, it was said that this alone would cure *ũhere* if rubbed in well.

Treatment G

A nest of termites (white ants) was dug up and the "queen", a big white insect looking like a large, fat maggot, was placed in a potsherd over the fire and soon reduced to liquid fat. This was an effective cure indeed for certain types of skin disease which the Kikuyu classed as *ũhere*, but which may or may not actually have been scabies.

***Mwĩthũa* (*Severe Itching*)**

Apart from the skin disease known as *ũhere*, young Kikuyu children often suffered from a severe form of itching called *mwĩthũa*. This was usually regarded as a sign that the person was suffering from intestinal parasites, and it was commonly treated as for worms. External treatment to reduce the irritation consisted of rubbing the juice of the plant called *ihũithia rĩerũ* on the affected areas. This was also, incidentally, used for irritation caused by mosquito bites and stings.

An alternative treatment, if the itching was accompanied by pimples, was to rub the heads off with a rough string bag and anoint the body with red ochre mixed with water.

***Rũbai, also called Matende* (*Elephantiasis*)**

The Kikuyu had no cure for elephantiasis, and all that could be done was to give the sufferer a herbal drug to act as a tonic and so slow its development. This tonic was made by boiling the bark of *mũhũtĩ, mũteta, mũbũthĩ,* and *mũgaita,* and using the water they were boiled in to make gruel.

p.924

Mangũ* (*Leprosy*) *and Uonje

Mangũ was the ordinary term for leprosy, and *uonje* was the state of being very crippled. Sometimes as a result of leprosy a person suffered from rotting flesh, especially the fingers and toes, to the point where the hands and feet dropped off. This state was referred to as *uonje*, and it could not be cured, but in those cases where it was due to the sufferer having broken a tribal taboo or gone contrary to the expressed deathbed orders of a parent, the complaint could be alleviated a little by ceremonial purification and magical treatment. Leprosy was greatly feared.

***Kĩronda* (*Sores*)**

This Kikuyu word means "a sore", and was applied chiefly to the great open sores of the type we call "veldt sores" today. The best treatment was said to have been a secret herbal remedy used by various professional herbalists and taken internally (presumably healing the sores by purifying the blood). I have been unable to obtain details of this treatment, for the secret was jealously guarded and known only to a few.

A household treatment was used if the sores were not very serious, consisted of applying the sticky juice from *rũrenda* roots (also called *mũng'aria*). This juice was applied to the sore after it had been washed with warm water, and caused it to gradually disappear altogether.

***Mahĩa* (*Burns*)**

There were two recognised treatments for burns, one for adults and the other for children.

Treatment A

As soon as an adult was burnt either by fire or by boiling liquid, honey was applied. As this was nearly always kept by every household in (p.925)

readiness for the making of ceremonial beer, it was seldom unavailable. Over the honey was sprinkled *ira* powder, of which every normal household also had a supply for ceremonial purposes.

If the burn was not severe, this was considered to be sufficient treatment. In the case of severe burns, after preliminary treatment as described above, friends collected dry sugar-cane peel, castor oil berry husks, and broken bits of gourd. These were charred together in a potsherd and ground to a powder, which was mixed with a little castor oil to form a smooth black paste. This was smeared thickly over the dressing of honey and *ira* powder, and covered with vegetable down from the plant called *thima*. The dressing was left intact until it eventually came away with the burnt skin, leaving a new skin over the healed burn. Burns so treated seldom turned septic.

Treatment B

For children and infants a burn was treated with honey and *ira* powder and covered with a piece of the skin of a hare, fur side downwards. If hare skin was not available, hyrax or other soft fur was used.

***Thita* (*Whitlows*)**

This was a common Kikuyu complaint characterised by severe swellings of the fingers, which sometimes burst and were very painful. The normal treatment was to leave the swellings until they burst and then anoint them with fresh hyena dung! This substance was normally taboo, and even to touch it involved ceremonial purification, yet people suffering from *thita* took infinite pains to find fresh hyena dung, for it was believed that nothing else would heal the disease.

***Iganĩ* (*Swollen Testicles*)**

The symptoms of this complaint were very swollen testicles. The only way to be cured was to go to a medicine-man, who treated the area with the magic powder known as *njeehũ*. Even this treatment was not certain, and in many cases *iganĩ* was incurable.

In the latter part of the last century there was a professional herbalist (p.926) whom all my informants said had an infallible cure for *iganĩ*. His *name* was Mũcũng'ũ, and he became rich as a result of his ability to cure this complaint. However, he never passed on his secret, and it was lost with his death in about 1900.

***Ihu rĩa Mũthũthũma* (*Distended Stomach*)**

This was the Kikuyu name for complaints which caused a great distending of the stomach, so that the sufferer, whether male or female, "looks as though he or she is pregnant". It is not easy to say exactly what the disease was and it is possible that the name covered several distinct diseases with similar symptoms. I know of two Africans who were diagnosed by Kikuyu herbalists as suffering from *ihu rĩa mũthũthũma* and who were diagnosed by medical officers as having diabetes. One of them was given six months to live. He then went to a Kikuyu herbalist and 10 years later was still alive and very fit. Several Kikuyu herbalists claimed to be able to cure this complaint, but they would not part with their secret, since it was a source of considerable income to them and they did not want it to be made known.

In addition to these secret cures, it was claimed that the juice of one *mũhoko* leaf cured this trouble in its early stages. *Mũhoko* is a very poisonous plant and if more than one leaf was used the patient died.

***Kĩrũngũrĩra* (*Heartburn Due to Indigestion*)**

A person suffering from heartburn licked a lump of either Magadi soda or papyrus soda ash, and this relieved the discomfort.

Kĩegetha (*Hiccups*)

The Kikuyu not infrequently suffered from hiccups, but unless they were severe and prolonged, no special treatment was considered necessary. If hiccuping continued for a long period, and caused serious discomfort, someone jumped out at the sufferer to startle him, and this had the desired effect. Alternatively, the person drank a lot of water in one gulp.

p.927

Inangethũ (*Sciatic Nerve*)

Severe sciatica was by no means a rare complaint among the Kikuyu. Several remedies were used, but not always with success. The most certain, according to my informants, was the magical remedy described below as treatment C.

Treatment A

If the pain was not very severe, it was commonly treated as for rheumatism.

Treatment B

This cure consisted of an external application made from the following ingredients: some bones of a he-goat, roots of the plant called *cong'e*, skins of the *mũcuuru* variety of banana, and grass stems of the species called *rũkonda*. These ingredients were all charred together in a potsherd and then powdered. This done, a few incisions were made in the skin over the painful area and the powder was rubbed in.

Treatment C

The most widely used treatment for sciatica was the following method, which, if the patient had faith, was invariably successful. The friends of the patient had to find a woman who had given birth to twins, and she was summoned to the bedside of the sufferer. First she placed her right foot seven times on to the area of the sciatic nerve, where the pain was most severe, leaving it there each time for about 30 seconds. She then repeated the process with the left foot also seven times. Finally she sat down on the patient's sciatic nerve also seven times, walking round him between each act of sitting. On the following day the woman had to return and repeat the whole performance, and usually by this time the pain was already much relieved. After the second treatment the patient got well very rapidly. The success of this treatment depended upon the faith of the doctor as well as that of the patient. (I [p.928] personally have witnessed this treatment for sciatica and can testify to its efficacy. The patient's faith was so great, that after having been prostrate for days he recovered almost at once when such a woman was at last found and brought to his aid.)

Kũrũara Ini (*To Be Ill as to the Liver: Liver Pain*)

The Kikuyu sometimes spoke loosely of *mũrimũ wa ini*, though when questioned they stated that liver trouble was not really a *mũrimũ* at all in the strictest sense of the word. There were several different ways of treating pains in the liver, but it was generally admitted that certain types of liver troubles were incurable and eventually caused death.

Treatment A

Leaves of the cultivated variety of *ihũithia rĩerũ* were boiled gently for several hours with some bark of the tree called *mũiri*. The liquid was then strained off and a small quantity of it was mixed each night with fresh milk and left to stand until the next morning, when it was drunk before eating.

Treatment B

Again the leaves of the plant called *ihũithia rĩerũ* were an important ingredient, but to these were added the roots of the plants called *cong'e*, *mũhĩa* (sorghum), *mũcege*, and *nyeki yα kĩgombe*. If it could be found, a special type of tree fungus known as *gũtũ kwa mũtĩ* (literally, the ear of the tree) was added. These various ingredients were all boiled together in water taken from a hollow in an old decaying tree. Such water was called *nyoni ya mũtĩ* (the omen of the tree). When all the above ingredients had been boiled together, the liver of a young ram was added and they were boiled again, slowly, and stirred continuously. The solids were then strained away and the liquid was stored in a gourd. A small hornful (about a breakfast cupful) was drunk three times a day for three days.

p.929
Treatment C

The roots of the plant called mwaritha were boiled in water for a few hours. Then the water was strained off, mixed with equal parts of fresh milk, and drunk while warm. This treatment was supposed to be accompanied by a special diet: the patient might eat only gruel made from maize that had been roasted first and then ground to flour.

Treatment D

The fourth recognised treatment for liver complaints was not herbal, but consisted of drinking fresh, warm urine of a virgin ewe. Many Kikuyu claimed that this was far and away the most effective treatment for liver troubles.

***Ndigana* (*Gall Sickness*)**

This word, when applied to a human complaint, means gall sickness or bile. There were several distinct ways of treating this complaint.

Treatment A

Leaves of mũciĩ mwerũ (also called gaciĩ kerũ), mũthakwa wa aathi, and mũcũgũ were boiled together. The water was strained and allowed to cool before the patient drank it. This potion was a violent emetic, and after vomiting freely the patient recovered.

Treatment B

A large gourdful of milk was boiled and the patient was made to drink it while it was very hot. This caused violent vomiting and brought relief. The interesting point about this treatment is the way the milk was heated. Kikuyu custom did not permit milk to be boiled in an earthenware jar, therefore, milk heated for this treatment was put cold into a gourd bottle and red hot branding irons were plunged into it. By the time this was done several times the milk was boiling.

p.930
Aphrodisiacs

Impotence, if it was not serious and was of a temporary nature, was usually treated by a course of herbal tonics to increase the general health of the person concerned. These tonics were taken in connection with a meat feast, and the plants used are listed in Chapter 8.

On the other hand, if a man was temporarily impotent and it was essential that he function sexually in connection with some ceremony, or if he was very old and wished to have sexual intercourse

with his wives, then he made use of the aphrodisiac drug derived from the creeper known as *mũũgũ wa inakamwe*. Roots of this creeper were collected, bruised, and boiled for an hour or two in water. The water was then strained and used to make broth. This juice was very powerful as an aphrodisiac, and if after taking it the man did not have sexual intercourse, he had an emission in his sleep, so great was the stimulus to the sex organs.

Barrenness in Women

Barrenness in women was dealt with only by magic (see Chapter 14).

Menstrual Complaints

Female complaints, such as failure of the menses to develop or excessive loss of blood at menstruation or at the menopause were not treated herbally, but only magically by a medicine-man (see Chapter 26).

Herbal Drugs to Stimulate Childbirth

If a woman's labour proved difficult and prolonged and she lost the power to expel the child, steps were taken to stimulate the muscular movements of the womb.

p.931

Treatment A

The woman was given some bark to chew of either *mũgere* or *muunjuga-iria*. She was instructed to swallow the bitter juice, and it was claimed that either of these juices would have the desired effect.

Treatment B

Ndonga, the powdered roots of *mũtonga*, were mixed with water and used to induce spasms if labour was difficult or if the afterbirth would not come away.

Kĩrũmati (*Weakness as a Result of Childbirth*)

The symptoms of this ailment were pains in the abdomen, general weakness, and failure to recover normal health after giving birth. For this complaint the standard treatment was as follows: the roots, stem, and leaves of the plant known as *njogu ya iria*, some leaves of *mũthigiũ*, and the undigested stomach contents of a freshly killed ewe or she-goat were boiled together for some time, after which the liquid was strained, and mutton fat was added, and the mixture was stirred well. The woman was given a small half-gourdful of this two or three times a day. It acted as a general tonic and she soon regained normal health.

Failure of a Mother's Milk Supply

If a mother had an inadequate supply of milk, the following herbal treatment was used. The roots of a creeping plant called *kamũriya* (also called *itombo*), were crushed and boiled, and the infusion was strained A cassava tuber was crushed to a pulp and mixed with this, together with some flour made from finger millet grain. The whole fixture was then left in a pot to stand in a warm place for about a day, which caused it to ferment slightly. If the woman drank a half-gourdful of this three times a day for a day or two, it was said that it stimulated her milk glands and she then had enough milk to suckle her child.

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Other Sicknesses and Causes

Sickness Caused by Departed Spirits

Apart from the diseases and complaints which have been listed above the Kikuyu suffered from a number of complaints for which they had neither special names nor special remedies, and in many cases these were regarded as inflictions sent by angry departed spirits who had in some way been offended. If a person was suddenly taken ill by some unknown disease, for example appendicitis or heart trouble, a medicine-man was at once consulted by the friends or relatives of the sick person, and he was requested to find the cause of the trouble so that it might be removed, if possible, and the patient cured.

Sometimes a person who was suddenly taken ill in an unaccountable fashion knew that he had done something likely to anger his deceased ancestors. In that case he did not need to consult a medicine-man, and he made a sacrifice to appease the angry spirits.

Sometimes, too, a man or woman was taken ill by a disease which was known and for which there were herbal remedies, but in spite of treatment the patient got worse instead of better. This was taken as a sign that the complaint, though of the type that could be of natural origin, had been sent by a departed spirit as a punishment. In such a case no herbal remedy was of any avail unless it was accompanied by consultation with a medicine-man to discover the ultimate cause, so that the angry spirit might be appeased. Methods of diagnosing the displeasure of spirits are discussed in Chapter 26 ("Magic and Divination"), and the means of appeasing them is dealt with in Chapter 25 ("Religion").

Sickness Caused by Witchcraft (*Ũrogi*)

In some cases unaccountable ill health or sickness of some unknown type was diagnosed by a medicine-man as being the result of witchcraft (ũrogi) practised by an enemy against the sufferer. If this was the case, the witchcraft had to be countered by magic more powerful if patient was to recover, or else the person practising the magic had to be discovered and persuaded to withdraw the evil effects. This matter is dealt with in Chapter 27.

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Sickness Caused by Breaking Taboos

The Kikuyu believed that any person who deliberately neglected to observe tribal law and custom, or who of his own free will broke the law governing sexual conduct in married life or in other branches of social relationship, brought supernatural wrath upon himself. This was manifested in several ways. Either the person who had broken the laws became ill, and if he did not repent, confess, and make amends, he died, or else the punishment was inflicted upon him indirectly, causing his family or perhaps his flocks to suffer. Sometimes, therefore, when a medicine-man was consulted as to the cause of some unidentifiable sickness, he found out that it was due either to the patient or a relative having broken the law, and if this was the case amends had to be made at once if further punishment was to be avoided. This aspect of sickness is dealt with in Chapter 26 ("Magic and Divination") and Chapter 28 ("Ceremonial Purification").

Surgical Practices

Kikuyu surgical practices were confined chiefly to stitching wounds, setting broken limbs, bleeding, and extracting teeth.

Treatment of Wounds

Serious sword cuts, spear wounds, and wounds caused by the claws or teeth of animals such as lions and leopards, or the horns of animals such as buffalo or rhinoceros, were treated in the following manner.

First, the wound was washed out with clean cold water, preferably from a spring, and preferably carried in a banana leaf. Then it was stitched carefully so as to draw the edges together. This "stitching" was actually more like lacing. Small holes were carefully made in the puckered skin on either side of the wound, and about a ¼in. from the edge on both sides of the wound. Long, straight thorns of mũthuthi, or filing that, of mũgaa were pushed through each side of the skin so that they lay across the wound. When a sufficient number of thorns had been so inserted, the wound was laced up tightly by winding a thin (p.934) piece of bark from the root of a castor oil tree, or a piece of banana fibre, round the ends of the thorns, drawing the flesh together. Then bark of the plant known as *mũtanga* was ground to a fine yellow powder and freely sprinkled over the raw edges of the wound. This powder had disinfectant properties and prevented flies from settling on the wound

In place of the powdered bark of *mũtanga*, the juice of the bulbs of the "red lily", called by the Kikuyu *ngwacĩ ya ngoma*, could be used as a disinfectant. This juice was poisonous if taken internally, but had strong antiseptic properties on wounds.

A special tonic was prepared for the patient, designed to keep the blood pure and promote healing from within. This tonic was made by boiling a little *mũtamaiyũ* and *mũcarage* bark, straining off the water, and mixing it with honey and powdered *ngaita* berries. If the patient drank this mixture regularly it was said to absolutely prevent suppuration. The patient was usually given plenty of meat to eat during convalescence.

When the wound was nearly healed and the edges had joined up, the lacing was undone and the thorns pulled out. At the time of this study (1939), the neat and tidy scars which a high proportion of Kikuyu men over 60 years of age had on their bodies as a result of warfare testified to the efficiency of this method of dressing and stitching wounds.

Wounds that did not need stitching were simply washed and treated either with *mũtanga* bark powder or the juice of the *ngwacĩ ya ngoma*. The treatment was accompanied by a tonic to promote healing and general blood purity.

Setting Broken Limbs

A broken limb was stretched until the broken ends of the bone were as nearly as possible in their proper position. A quantity of frayed banana bark fibre (*mbuutha*) was wrapped round the limb to prevent chafing from the splints that were used to keep the bone in the correct position while it healed. Four splints made from bamboo or other light, strong wood were put into position and tied in place. Over these was wrapped a special gaiter made from a piece of hard oxhide and shaped to fit the limb. This was tightly laced into position over the splints, taking the place of the plaster bandages of modern medicine. The gaiter and splints together served to keep the limb quite rigid and the bones in place. About the third or fourth day the gaiter was carefully removed without jolting the limb, so as to allow air to circulate and cool the (p.935) skin. If this was not done, a rash was caused by the heat generated inside the gaiter and inflammation and sores resulted. The gaiter was then put back and left for another three days before again being removed for a few hours.

While the broken bones were mending, the patient was kept as still as possible, and he was given a tonic like that given to a man suffering from a serious wound. By promoting general health, this tonic was said to hasten the fusion of the broken bones.

Blood Letting and Cupping

The Kikuyu were great believers in drawing blood to relieve pain, and they did so not only to relieve headaches, but to relieve almost any other kind of pain and ache as well, including rheumatism and internal pains such as pains in the abdomen and the chest.

Cupping was performed by means of a knife and a short section of ox horn, the top of which had been cut off so that it was open at both ends, one opening being wide and the other very small. Such a cupping horn was called *hihi*. Small cuts were made in the skin over the area where the pain was felt, and then the wide aperture of the horn was placed over these and pressed down firmly. The man doing the cupping applied his mouth to the small opening, and sucked out the air so as to leave a vacuum. He then closed the small opening with a piece of clay or beeswax that he had held in his mouth in readiness. After the cupping horn had been in position for about five minutes, the clay was removed and the horn was taken off.

As an alternative to cupping, bleeding or blood letting was sometimes performed. This was done by simply cutting a vein over the bridge of the nose, whereupon a certain amount of blood spurted out. An alternative was for the patient to hold a leather thong tightly round his own neck for a few minutes—not tight enough to strangle himself, but tight enough to cause a vein in the neck to bulge with blood pressure. This vein was then pierced in a way similar to that used in bleeding an ox, and, when the blood had gushed out, the relaxed tension caused the vein to return to normal, and the incision was automatically closed by muscular pressure.

Among other things, blood letting was regarded by the Kikuyu as a standard remedy for all forms of fever.

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Dentistry

Dental practice was confined to extraction, which the Kikuyu held to be the only remedy if the tooth was very bad. Extraction was done by specialists, who used the tang end (*gura*) of a sword. The patient's head was firmly held by one or two assistants, and the dentist placed the tang down the edge of the gum under the body of the tooth and along the root, thus levering the tooth out. No fees were payable to a dentist.

Treatment of Snake Bite

Most Kikuyu people kept a small section of *ndonga* root in their homes. This was said to draw out the poison and be a definite cure for snake bite if the area was lanced at once and this root rubbed over it.

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Chapter 22 – Death and the Disposal of the Dead

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Summary of Kikuyu Beliefs concerning Death

Introduction

Death, coming as it does inevitably to all in due course, was viewed by the Kikuyu with a considerable degree of fatalism. Though death was never in any ordinary circumstance welcomed, of course, the Kikuyu did not have the haunting fear of death which grips the people of many other civilisations.

A Kikuyu who knew that his end was near usually faced the fact calmly and with equanimity, and this can be accounted for in a large measure by the belief that all departed spirits were reunited in a single spirit world. Kikuyu religious beliefs did not countenance the idea of a heaven and a hell, and when about to die a man was not tormented by the fear that after all he might be destined for the wrong place. As a departed spirit, too, his life would not be unpleasant, for his needs would be seen to by those members of his family who remained on earth and by their descendants, and eventually his spirit would be reincarnated and take its place once more among the living.

According to the Kikuyu, death took place because *ikundo rĩa mũndũ ũcio nĩrĩathenga* (literally, the knot of that man has been removed), which had reference to the Kikuyu method of keeping an appointment. When a Kikuyu made an appointment to do something on a particular day in the future, he tied a series of knots in a piece of string to represent the number of days that would elapse before the appointment. Then, on each successive day he untied one of the knots, until finally he came to the last knot and knew that the appointed day had been reached. So the conception of death was that the appointed days of any individual were numbered by some unseen supernatural power, and when the last knot had been untied, the day appointed for death had come. In other words, the Kikuyu believed that the day of death was fixed at birth, and when "a man's days had run" death had to intervene. As nothing could alter that, there was no use in worrying.

Moreover, this philosophical attitude toward death also meant that the relatives and friends of a dead man did not mourn unduly. Although (p.938) they did feel sorrow and great loneliness when a friend or loved one died, they were comforted by two beliefs: the dead person's spirit would always be near at hand, and death was inevitable and therefore there need be no regrets that perhaps the life could have been saved if more had been done.

In spite of this philosophical attitude toward death, there was another aspect that is curious. Although death as an abstract thing was not feared, a dead body was an unclean thing, and in this sense death was contagious. Therefore, if any person touched a dead body, he or she had at once to be purified, as otherwise the contagion of death would be transferred. These two ideas were mutually contradictory, for if death was pre-ordained for every individual, then the touching of a dead body should not have been able to cause death unless that person's death had also been pre-ordained.

Actually, it is likely that these two distinct ideas concerning death were of different origin, and both were retained without much thought being given to the fact that they were irreconcilable, just as many other people's beliefs are irreconcilable with each other, and yet are tenaciously held in spite of this.

At the conclusion of this chapter we shall try to consider in more detail the ideas and beliefs of the Kikuyu concerning death, but before we can do that we must examine the rites and ceremonies that were connected with death and the disposal of the dead.

We have noted again and again in the foregoing chapters that Kikuyu custom varied considerably between those who belonged to the Kikuyu guild and those of the Ũkabi guild, and this was no less true of death ceremonies than of initiation ceremonies. We shall therefore have to consider the

customs of each guild separately. Moreover, there were a considerable number of differences in the details of death ceremonies according to the social status and the age of the deceased, so that we shall have to consider many different aspects of death and the disposal of the dead if we are to obtain a true picture.

Normal Deaths of Kikuyu Guild Members

The term "normal death" applies to deaths due to sickness or disease, other than smallpox, or deaths the Kikuyu attributed merely to old age rather than to a specific disease, as explained in Chapter 21. Deaths due to violence, suicide, or accident, or even death that took place away from home, did not rank as normal, and must be considered separately.

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An Elder

Use of the term "elder" in this chapter does not mean any married man, but a married man who was of the standing of an elder and who had sons of his own who were old enough to take part in a burial ceremony. Young married men, as we have seen, remained in the warrior class long after they had a wife or wives and children, and they did not count as elders for our purposes in this chapter, even if they had paid certain of the council fees that were technically paid in order to become elders of the junior grades.

As soon as an elder died and his death was announced, messages were sent to all his sons who had been through the second birth ceremony asking them to come at once. In theory, the body of an elder could not be disposed of until all his sons were present, but in practice it was held to be sufficient if the eldest son of each wife was present, and as many of the others as possible. If the eldest son of any of his wives was absent on a journey, the rites and ceremonies had to be postponed until he arrived home, and meanwhile two of the other sons had to watch over their father's body night and day, for a dead body that was awaiting ceremonial rites might never be left alone in a hut, and in no circumstances might it be touched by rats or mice.

As soon as an elder died a "normal" death, and while messages were being sent to summon all his sons from wherever they happened to be, a few senior council elders from the surrounding district were called in by the senior son who was at home when the death took place. When these elders arrived they were given a ram or a he-goat to slaughter, or if the deceased was a very rich man, an ox. This was a fee they had to be given in order that they might give guidance and advice as to the rites and ceremonies for the correct disposal of the body. The animal paid as a fee was called *mbũri ya kĩrĩra* (the sheep or goat for traditional law), and unless it was paid the elders would not tell the family what procedure to adopt or how to carry out the subsequent purification rites, and in consequence difficulties would arise. Therefore, on the death of an elder, every family produced the fee at once.

The elders who had been called in first told the senior son present how to put his father's body in the correct position for burial, for this bad to be done as soon as possible after death took place. The dead man had to be laid on his right side in "the sleeping position", that is to say, with his legs slightly flexed and with his right hand under his cheek and his left hand by his breast.

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Next the elders enquired if the deceased, before he died, had prepared the ceremonial digging stick with which his grave was to be dug. Many elders, as they grew old and knew they could not live long, took care to prepare such a stick themselves, and kept it read in their hut, but a man who had died rather suddenly could not do so and the elders who had been called in had to see to the matter. One of the council elders then went with one of the sons of the deceased to select a bush from which the special digging stick was to be cut and to make sure that it was obtained with due observance of the laws on the matter. The stick had to be taken from either a *mũbirũ mũirũ*, or failing that, from a *mũgũcwa*; no other species of tree or bush would do. Moreover, the plant chosen to provide the stick had to be dug up by the roots in such a way that it could never shoot up again, for its doing so would be a grave calamity and would spoil the peace of the deceased in the spirit world.

While one elder was thus supervising the cutting of the grave-digging stick, the other elders were giving instructions about important matters in the homestead. First they gave orders that the fires in every hut in the homestead had to be tended carefully day and night, and that in no circumstances was any fire to be allowed to go out until the *hukũra* ceremonies which concluded the death rites had been carried out. Secondly, they gave orders that the goat and cow bells of every animal in the homestead should be removed. Thirdly, all he-goats that were mature enough to serve the females were to be castrated at once, and all rams (which were never castrated) were to be taken away from the flocks and shut up by themselves so that they could not serve the ewes. Similarly, all stud bulls were to be isolated from the cows.

If death took place at night or early in the day, and if all sons were available so that the burial could take place on that day, all the flocks and herds had to be kept inside the homestead and fed with fodder, and all members of the family, including the women and children, had to remain within the homestead and not go to draw water or work in the fields. If, however, burial was to be delayed for a day or more owing to the absence of a son, the flocks could go to pasture, and the women to the fields, but on the day chosen for the burial no person or animal might leave the homestead until the body had been buried.

When all the preliminary arrangements had been made, and when all the sons were present, the council elders chose the site for the grave and supervised the digging of it and the preparation of the body. The grave site had to be near to, but on the far side of, the rubbish midden, but the exact position was left to the choice of the elders, unless the deceased, before he died, had chosen a spot himself and marked it with (p.941) a peg. When the exact site had been fixed, the grave digging was started by the senior unmarried son of the deceased, or, if there was no unmarried son, a nephew of the deceased. The married sons had to be present, and the son who started the digging was later assisted by some of his junior brothers.

As a preliminary to the actual excavation, the son who started the jigging had to take a little soil from the head end, put it in a leaf, and lay it carefully on one side. He did likewise with soil from the right- hand side of the grave, some from the left-hand side, and finally some from the foot end. Then the grave-diggers started to dig an oval pit about 4ft long and 3ft wide. They used only the special digging stick to loosen the soil, and ladled it out with their hands. This grave was usually a little over 3ft deep.

While the grave was being dug the elders took from the deceased's flocks a he-goat, or if he was very rich, a small ox; slaughtered it, and cut up the meat ready for roasting. This meat would be eaten by all the sons of the dead man after he had been buried.

When the grave had been dug, the grave diggers were instructed how to prepare the body for burial. All the deceased man's ornaments that he was wearing when he died were taken off. These would be buried with him, but they might never be left on him. Then the body was wrapped carefully in the skin garments of the deceased, after these had been knotted at the corners. His sleeping mat was also folded round him, and then the whole bundle was tied up like a parcel with bark and roots of the plant called *muoha-akuũ*. This bark and root had been collected by one of the elders who had been called in to supervise the proceedings. Care had to be taken not to cover up the face of the dead man, which had to be allowed to peep out of the bundle. It would be a very serious matter if the face and eyes were covered up, so that the dead man could not see what was going on.

When the body was ready it was carried to the grave, the senior unmarried son (the senior grave-digger) taking his father's head, and the other sons who had helped in digging the grave taking the feet and supporting the back. A body was not carried in quite the same way as an ordinary load, but was carried on its side, in the position in which it had been laid immediately after death, with all four carriers the same side of the bundle, by the man's back. Care had to be taken to carry the deceased feet first through the door of the hut in which he had died, and similarly through the main entrance of the homestead.

The body was carefully laid in the grave so that it was on its right side, facing the homestead. Then the skin of the goat or ox that had (p.942) been slaughtered for the sons to eat was laid over the bundle containing the body, care again being taken not to cover the face and eyes; and the ornaments that the deceased was wearing when he died were all laid in the grave near his stomach. The senior unmarried son put back the first handful of soil, and the other grave-diggers joined in and put some soil over the whole body, after which the grave was completely filled. Then stones were brought, and a large pile of them was built up all over the grave. Meanwhile, every son, from the eldest to the youngest child that had been "born a second time" had to bring a branch of the *mũgaa* thorn tree and lay it over the pile of stones to represent their share of the burying ceremony. The four handfuls of soil that had been put in leaves before the grave was dug were put back at this time, care being taken to put each handful back in the place from which it had been taken. The stick with which the grave had been dug was put on the mound, and the burying was over.

Then the sons, other than the four who had dug the grave and carried the body, all partook of the meat of the slaughtered goat (or ox). The other four had to be purified from the contagion of death before they could eat their share. For this, their preliminary purification, a small virgin ewe was slaughtered out in the bush beyond the homestead by one or two old men of no social standing, such as serfs or *athuuri matarĩ kĩene* (men who had no property or homes). Then an elder fetched water in a banana leaf, and the stomach contents of the ewe were added to this before all four grave-diggers washed themselves all over with the mixture. The old men who had killed the ewe received a portion of meat from the goat or ox killed for the other sons as a fee for their services.

The meat and skin of the ewe were thrown away for the hyenas to eat, all except a small portion which the elders had to eat, so that *mbũri ndĩgateo ta mũndũ* (the ewe might not be thrown out like a person).

When the body had been buried and the meat eaten, any married sons of the deceased went back to their own homes, but until the concluding *hukũra* ceremony had been performed they took care not to have sexual intercourse with their wives or with any other women, and they slept in their own huts, not in the hut of any wife.

The four unmarried sons who had dug the grave and carried the body took up residence in the hut of their deceased father, and here they had to remain until the *hukũra* ceremony took place. They might sit outside the hut during the day, but had to sleep in it at night, when except for purposes of relieving themselves, they were not to go out at all. During this period, the other unmarried sons of the family had to act as "servants" for the four who had dug the grave, fetching them (p.943) yams and sugar-cane to eat, roasting yams, bananas, and potatoes for them, and generally looking after them.

The *hukũra* ceremonies took place when the next moon reached the same stage it had been at when the burial took place (an interval of about 28 days). During this period the women, girls, and children continued to work in the fields, cook, draw water, and perform their daily tasks, but they were not to have sexual intercourse or superficial sexual contact of any kind. Care had to be taken that no domestic animal that belonged to the deceased had sexual intercourse either, and the herdsmen had to take particular care that the ewes, cows, and she-goats were not mated by male animals of other homesteads which they might come into contact with while out grazing. This ban on sexual contact was the most important rule to be observed during the interval between death and the *hukũra* ceremonies. If the married sons had ceremonies in process in their own homes which demanded ceremonial sex acts, they had to have friends perform these acts for them, and even this was done only if the ceremonies were such that they could not be postponed, for by so doing the wives of the deceased's sons were having sexual contact with men, and this, though not absolutely taboo, was not lucky.

The Ceremony of Kũhukũra

For the Kikuyu, every single death involved the performance of a ceremony of *kũhukũra* (the purification ceremony to free the home from the blight of death), which was considerably more complicated in the case of an elder than it was otherwise. In later parts of this chapter the various modifications will be dealt with, but here we must consider the full *hukũra* ceremony as performed for a senior elder who had been buried in the way described above.

The object of the ceremony of *kũhukũra* was to remove the contagion of death and so enable all members of the family to resume normal life once more. The ceremony was divided into a number of stages, and continued over a period of eight days and nights, so that it might be brought to a close on the ninth day. In this respect it followed closely the customs connected with initiation. Similarly, too, the stages of the *hukũra* ceremony were marked by ceremonial sex acts on alternate days, so it seems that the ceremony of *kũhukũra* was intended as a final *rite de passage*, marking the transformation of a living person to a departed ancestor. This will be further discussed at the conclusion of this chapter.

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The words *kũhukũra* (to unbury) and *kũhuka* (to bury) are from the obsolete stem *-huka*, which survives in such words as the noun *huko* meaning mole rat, an animal notorious for burying objects. The body of the deceased was not, of course, literally unburied, but the ceremony was connected with the release of the soul and its transference to "the place of the spirits". This interpretation of the *hukũra* ceremonies was not conceptualised in the minds of the Kikuyu, but the details of the rites indicate that this was the meaning.

When the moon reached the approximate stage it had been in when the death occurred, the senior members of the deceased man's family arranged for some beer to be brewed by his widows, and this beer was set to ferment in the hut of the senior widow, round which the ceremony would

centre. When the beer was ready, they invited the council elders who had come to advise at the actual burial to come and drink the beer, which was called *njohi ya kĩrĩra* (beer for the traditional customs). Before the elders drank the beer they consulted the sons of the dead man about fixing a day for the ceremonies to begin, and they gave them instructions for the preliminary arrangements they had to make: 1. They had to make arrangements for an old woman who was accustomed to performing the ceremony of "shaving" the heads at *hukũra* ceremonies, to be present on the first day of the rites. 2. Men had to be found who were willing to perform, for a fee, the service of ceremonial sexual intercourse with the widows during the course of the ceremonies. There had to be at least one of these men (called *endia-rũhiũ*) for each of the widows other than the senior widow. The latter was to perform this ceremonial act with a younger brother or patrilineal cousin of her deceased husband, not with a ***mwendia-rũhiũ*** (a person who sells his sword for a fee: his sword being his penis). 3. They had to find a certain number of *athuuri matarĩ kĩene* (old men who had no special social status), who would be needed in connection with the ceremonies. 4. Arrangements had to be made for a few elderly widows of long standing to be present. 5. On the evening before the *hukũra* ceremonies were due to start a fat ram of a single colour had to be tied to the bedpost of the senior widow so as to associate it with her, and through her with her co-wives. This ram had to be slaughtered on the following day, as we shall see. 6. Care had to be taken to inform all the children of the deceased elder of the day when the *hukũra* ceremonies were to start so that all those who had to attend would be present. 7. Every widow of the deceased had to spend the days before the *hukũra* started preparing quantities of cold cooked foods with the help of her daughters, because for the duration of the ceremonies no foods of any kind might be cooked.

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The First Day of the Hukũra Ceremonies. Early in the morning of the first day of the ceremonies the first ram was brought out into the courtyard, where it was slaughtered by one or two male relatives of the deceased other than his children. When they had completed their task and divided the carcass into the correct ceremonial joints, they were given leaves of the plant called *ihũithia rĩerũ*, and they washed their hands with the juice from these leaves so as to purify themselves. This was necessitated by their having handled the *ndũrũme ya gĩkuũ* (ram of death), which was the name given to this particular sacrificial animal.

When the animal had been cut up, one of the senior council elders who was acting as advisor and counsellor, took the right foreleg and the right *ikengeto* (half-saddle joint), and another of the elders took a fire-brand. These two elders were then joined by all the widows of the deceased and all the men who had come to perform the ceremonial sex acts with the widows. A younger brother of the deceased, or younger male patrilineal cousin if there was no younger brother, also went with the procession, as the man who would be the partner of the senior widow of the deceased in the sex rites. The procession was accompanied by a few senior members of the family—brothers or male cousins who were older than the deceased. They went with the others in order to witness the first stage of the *hukũra* ceremonies and to give advice as to the names of the deceased's dead relatives, who had to be called upon by name in the communion with the spirits that was about to take place. The widows of the deceased each carried bits of potsherd and broken gourd.

The whole procession, led by the council elders, made its way into the uncleared bush near the homestead. Having arrived at a secluded spot, the elders stopped and lit a small fire with the fire-brand they had brought with them from the hut of the senior widow. When the fire had been lit and the meat had been grilled, the elders proceeded to cut most of the meat into small portions,

placing these upon the bits of gourd and the potsherds that had been brought for the purpose. They also cut off one large chunk of meat, which was laid aside.

When all the meat had been cut up, each widow of the deceased, and each of the men who were to perform the ceremonial sex acts with them, tasted a little bit. Then the senior widow took a potsherd with meat in it, and while everybody else stood round in silence she held it in the palms of her hands and called out the name of her deceased husband, saying, "*Ūka rĩu ngũhe rũĩga rũaku, na ũreke igongona ciothe irĩĩke wega*". (Come now that I may give you your portion, and may allow all the sacrifices to be completed satisfactorily). The "sacrifices' referred to in these prayers were the ceremonial sex acts which (p.946) each widow was to perform, as we shall see presently. After the senior widow had thus called upon her dead husband and offered him his portion of the meat, the other widows, the younger brother of the deceased, and the men who were to *hukũra*, each in turn called upon some deceased relative of the man for whom this ceremony was being performed. Those called upon had to be people who were of the deceased's generation, either his brothers and sisters, his cousins, his wives, or wives of the above relatives who were already dead. In doing this, the people were prompted for names by the senior members of the family, who had come for this purpose. Only dead married people were thus mentioned by name, and each was offered a piece of meat, and was asked to give his or her blessing to the ceremonies that were to take place.

When the list of names of married, deceased relatives of the same generation as the dead person had been exhausted, more pieces of meat were offered to the spirits that were called *thaka*. These were the spirits of dead members of the deceased's generation who died before they were married and who would therefore never be reincarnated, since they had no descendants. Such spirits were never mentioned or called upon by name, but were addressed as *thaka*.

Finally, the large piece of meat that had been laid aside was held up by the senior widow and offered to *arĩa mariganĩire* (those who have been forgotten). They were invited to come and share this large piece of meat among themselves. All the potsherds and pieces of gourd were then laid upon the ground in a little group at the foot of a *mũthakwa* tree, with these offerings in them, and the ceremonial communion with the spirits was concluded. The spirit of the dead elder had now formally joined the other departed spirits, and had been communicated with for the first time by those whom he had left behind.

The whole party then returned to the homestead for the next rite, that of putting on *ngoka* for the departed spirits. The *ngoka* were rings made by one of the officiating elders by twisting a long tendril of the creeping grass known as *igoka*. As he made each one and laid it down finished, he called out the name of the dead man for whom the *hukũra* ceremony was taking place. He made enough for each widow and each of the men who was to have ceremonial sexual intercourse with one of them, to have one *ngoka* ring apiece to represent the deceased. Then the council elder made many more such rings, and as he made these he called out the names of the various people whose spirits had been called upon to eat the meat in the bush. He also made a number of rings to represent the unmarried, dead members of the deceased generation (*thaka*) and a few to represent those who had been forgotten. (p.947) These rings were divided up among the widows and those who were to have sexual intercourse with them, so that each had, in addition to the ring representing the dead man for whom the ceremony was being performed, several representing various of his dead relatives and members of his generation. Each person's rings were then tied together with bits of bark of the plant called *muoha-akuũ*, and put round his or her neck, where they remained until the

day they were ceremonially removed. A few extra rings were made for all the unmarried children of the deceased, each of whom had to wear a ring to represent their dead father.

Then each widow went to her bedroom accompanied by the man who was to perform the ceremonial sex act with her. Outside in the courtyard sat the council elders who were in charge of the proceedings and the old widows of long standing who had been called in. The senior widow had been accompanied by the younger brother or male cousin of her dead husband, and these two now proceeded to have full ceremonial sexual intercourse once, and once only. As soon as they had done so the man had to clear his throat loudly. When the elders and widows out in the courtyard heard this signal they told the second senior widow, and she and the man who was with her had ceremonial sexual intercourse. When this man gave the same signal to show that they had performed the "sacrifice", the elders told the next widow to proceed, and so on until each widow had performed the ceremonial sex act, with all her unmarried children and all the stock that belonged to her hut present in the hut, so that they might all participate in the ceremony. This ceremonial sex act on the first day of the ceremonies was called *gũtheca gĩkuũ* (to pierce death, i.e. have intercourse with death).

The elders and widows of long standing who were in the courtyard waiting for the signals had to remain there until every widow had performed the rite. If the pair in any hut, after being told to proceed, were overlong in giving the signal, one of the senior women went in to find out what was wrong. If she found that the man was for one reason or another unable to perform the sex act, which was the sole reason for his presence, and for which he would receive a fee, he was called out and immediately sent away. The elders called upon one of the men who had already performed this act in another hut to come and function again, and during all the rest of the ceremonies he would act with two widows instead of one. The man who so failed and was sent away had to throw the ring (*ngoka*) that he had been wearing into the bush as he went. He took no further part in the proceedings and forfeited his right to a fee.

It was absolutely essential that every unmarried child of each widow (p.948) be present in her hut while she was performing the ceremony of sexual sacrifice, for she was performing it not only for herself, but on behalf of all her unmarried children, including warriors and initiated girls. If any children were absent, they would never be able to marry for they would not have been "purified from the contagion of death", and would infect whoever they married with this contagion of death as soon as they had sexual intercourse.

When all the ceremonial sex acts had been performed, the occupants of each hut went to sleep, but not before they had banked up the fires in each hut. If the fires were to go out on this or any night while the ceremony of *kũhukũra* was proceeding, it would be an even more serious matter than if they went out between the day of death and the start of the *hukũra* ceremonies.

The Second Day. This was called a *mũtĩro* day (or a day for suspending normal activities), and all that those who were engaged in the ceremonies did was eat, sit in the courtyard, and sleep. That night each widow slept in her hut, as did all her unmarried children, and the man who had performed the ceremonial sex act with her. But in no circumstances was sexual intercourse allowed on this night; it was a day and night of waiting.

The Third Day. On the morning of the third day each widow came out to the porch of her hut and here, under the direction of the council elders, she pretended to shave the head of the man who had had sexual intercourse with her, and he pretended to shave the head of the widow. This was only a preliminary to the proper shaving ceremonies. As soon as each pair had done this imaginary

shaving, they went to the middle of the courtyard, where the woman who had been brought for this special purpose, proceeded to shave all the hair on the head of each widow and the man who was her partner, in the strict order of their seniority. Each widow and each man had to catch all the hair that was shaved off them in his or her garments, after which each person went out into the bush and hid this hair carefully under a bush or tuft of grass.

The widows then proceeded to the cultivation areas and looked for castor oil plants growing on fallow land. From such a plant—in no circumstances might a plant in a cultivated field be chosen—each picked a head (*thandĩ*) of unripe castor oil berries, shelled them on the spot, and brought the unripe berries home in *mũtũndũ* leaves. Each widow's partner in the ceremonies then went secretly down to the river and drew a little water in a *mbũthũ* bottle gourd.

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As darkness approached that evening, each widow took her berries and the water brought for her, and went round to the left side of her hut, taking a fire-brand with her. Here she cooked the castor oil berries in a potsherd by the light of a wooden torch (*kamũrĩ*). When the oil started to come to the surface of the water in which the berries were being boiled, she took the potsherd off, for she did not want much oil, or oil well refined. Into this poor quality oil she dipped the knuckles of both hands, and with her knuckles rubbed the oil into her forehead, her chest, her arms, her shoulders, her knees, and her feet. The residue of the oil in the potsherd was then carried out straight away into the bush and hidden there, for if anyone were to take it they could make potent witchcraft (*ũrogi*) with it to destroy the widow and her children. This oil made in these special circumstances from unripe castor oil berries was called *tuura*.

That evening, each widow, with all her unmarried children and her stock present in the hut, again had ceremonial sexual intercourse once with her partner, in the order of seniority as on the evening of the first day and in the same way. This was called *gũtheca tuura* (to have sexual intercourse with *tuura*). The meaning and significance of the word *tuura* is obscure and no longer known by the Kikuyu; it was handed down from the distant past with this custom.

The Fourth Day. Like the second day, this was a day of *mũtĩro*, when everyone rested and did nothing but eat, sleep, and sit about.

The Fifth Day. With the fifth day, the *hukũra* ceremonies entered into the second stage. Up to this day everyone entering the hut of any of the widows had had to turn to the left and go round via the part of the hut known as the *kwerũ* (goat's and sheep's sleeping place), round the fire, and so to the part of the hut normally occupied by the human inhabitants. This was the wrong way to enter a hut, and if anybody entered that way in the normal course of events it would have been a serious offence. From the fifth day of the ceremonies the huts began again to be entered in the correct way.

The first four days were "bad days" during which the emphasis was on putting away the contagion of death, but the next four, starting on the fifth day, were "good days", and the object of the ceremonies connected with them was to return gradually to normal conditions. The proceedings opened on the morning of the fifth day with the slaughter of a he-goat known as *thenge ya gũtiira* (the goat for propping up).

Some of the meat of this animal was boiled in the hut of the various (p.950) widows, and some of it was roasted; it was eaten by all the members of the family and by the men who were the partners of the widows.

Apart from this meat eating, there was no special ceremony until nightfall, when everyone went to their huts. Then each widow and her partner had ceremonial sexual intercourse twice. There was no longer any need to observe any special order of seniority, and no longer any need to give a signal when the sex act had taken place. Nothing mattered so long as the pairs had intercourse twice between darkness and dawn next morning.

The Sixth Day. Early on the morning of the sixth day, the council elders who were supervising the whole of the ceremonies aroused all the members of the homestead and had them form into a procession in order of seniority, headed by the council elders who were in charge. Then came the brother or cousin of the dead man who was the partner of the senior widow. The latter followed next with all her unmarried children in the order of their ages, after whom came the man who was partner to the second senior widow, followed by the widow herself and her unmarried children, and so on.

The whole procession made its way to the nearest stream or river, and here everybody washed in the running water, those who had them untying the *ngoka* rings from round their necks. The rings were then untwisted and the bits of grass which formed them were thrown into the bush. This throwing away of the *ngoka* rings at the stream was called *gũte mathaga* (to throw away the personal ornaments). After this, the procession formed again and filed back to the homestead in the early light of morning.

After a brief pause for rest and food, all the widows and their partners set to work to prepare sugar-cane beer, which was called *njohi ya gũthambia moko* (beer for washing the hands). This was put to ferment that night in the hut of the senior widow, and was consumed next day in connection with the slaughter of the *ngoima ya ndoro* (a stall-fattened animal for mud).

In the afternoon, after the beer had been prepared, all the widows and their partners were ceremonially shaved a second time by the professional head-shaver. She then received her fee and went home.

On this, the night after the sixth day of the ceremonies, every person slept in the hut he or she had been sleeping in throughout the ceremony, but no sexual intercourse was allowed. This was a *mũtĩro* day, or day of waiting·

The Seventh Day. On the morning of the seventh day, an elder uterine brother of the deceased, if there was one who survived him, or, failing (p.951) that, an elder half-brother or an elder male patrilineal cousin, came to the homestead, bringing with him a ram that was called *ngoima ya ndoro* (a stall-fattened animal for mud). If the elder who had died had no elder brother, half-brother, or cousin who survived him, then some other member of their family acted in the place of such a man. The point of the ceremony was that a senior member of the family to which the dead man belonged, as distinct from his descendants, came to visit those who were in the midst of the *hukũra* ceremonies, and brought with him a ram and some beer.

The ram was slaughtered and eaten by the family as a whole, including the descendants of the dead man, the man who brought it, and any other near relatives who were available. This feast was called *kũrĩanĩra ngoima* (to eat the stall-fed beast together), and its significance was that it once more reunited the members of the family as a whole with the immediate family of the deceased who, for the past five weeks, had been in isolation owing to their contamination. It was the first sign that the contagion was now practically gone, and that the purification ceremonies were nearly over.

When the meat had been eaten, all members of the family who were old enough partook of the beer brought by the brother, and the beer brewed on the previous day by the widows and their partners.

On this, the evening of the seventh day, one would have expected that the ceremonial sexual intercourse would be performed again but this was not the case, and once more there was a *mũtĩro* (a day of rest). This was because the number seven was considered unlucky. All members of the family had to sleep in the huts, and the women had to be with their partners, but there was no sexual contact.

The Eighth Day. *On* the morning of the eighth day, a ram or a virgin ewe was slaughtered and a medicine-man was called in to carry out the ceremony of *gũtahĩkia* to purify the widows and their partners. Each widow and the man who had performed the ceremonial sexual intercourse with her was purified in strict order of seniority, just outside the doorways of the respective widows' huts.

That night the widows and their partners once again slept together and had ceremonial sexual intercourse twice. This completed the proceedings, and on the following day life returned to normal, and the men who had been partners of the widows received their fees and went home. The fee consisted of a sheep or a goat, and it was for this fee that the man "sold his sword".

If, during the course of the eight days of the *hukũra* ceremony, any the men who had been partners of the widows should have formed (p.952) a special friendship with his partner, then that man might, from this time on, claim a special right to come and have sexual intercourse with her and even to beget children by her. Such children, of course did not rank as the children of their physical father, but as children of the deceased man. Although the responsibility for looking after feeding, and clothing the widow was inherited by one of the relatives of the deceased, she could not be prevented from having her partner from the *hukũra* ceremonies as her lover if she wished it.

There were a certain number of special rules which concerned the *hukũra* ceremonies which we must now briefly examine before we pass on to the other rites and ceremonies connected with the disposal of the dead.

1. If, during the period of the *hukũra* ceremonies, any one of the widows had a menstrual period, she had to inform the council elders at once, and all ceremonies were suspended until her period was over, and then carried on from the point at which they had been interrupted.

2. If a simple miscarriage of a young foetus took place during the *hukũra* ceremonies, it was treated as if it was a menstrual period and the proceedings were merely suspended accordingly.

3. If, at the time of an elder's death, any one of his widows was at least seven months pregnant, the *hukũra* ceremonies did not take place at the normal time of four weeks after the burial, but were postponed until after the baby had been born and the ceremonies connected with the birth had been completed; it would have been a serious matter if a birth took place—or an advanced foetus miscarried—while the *hukũra* ceremonies were in progress.

4. If an elder died while one of his wives was in labour or just after she had given birth, he was not referred to as dead, but only as "asleep", until the ceremonies connected with that birth had been completed for him by someone else. Those ceremonies, however, had to be speeded up so that he might not have to be kept "asleep" too long.

5. If by any chance another death took place in the homestead while the *hukũra* ceremonies were in progress, the death was not recognised as such, but the dead person was said to be

"asleep", and was watched over until the ceremonies were completed. Then, when normal life had been resumed, the death was announced as having just occurred, and the body was disposed of according to the recognised methods depending upon social status·

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6. Very elderly widows who were not only past childbearing age but had had all their children initiated did not perform the ceremony of *kũhukũra* with the other widows, but after the *hukũra* ceremony was over they were purified (*tahĩkio*) by a medicine-man.

7. If for one reason or another the *hukũra* ceremonies for an elder had to be postponed for longer than the normal period of a month, the restriction on sex acts during the interval between death and the ceremony of *kũhukũra* was suspended for the married sons, but the widows still had to be continent.

If a widow failed to observe this rule of continence, her subsequent role in the ceremonies depended upon who her lover had been. Sex with a man who was not related to the deceased incurred no penalty, and when the *hukũra* ceremonies did start that man had to become her partner for the ceremonies. If, on the other hand, she broke the rule with a man who was a relative of her deceased husband, it was a very serious matter, and that widow would not be allowed to take part in the *hukũra* ceremonies when they took place. Instead, she would be purified at a later date by the slaughter of a special ewe. If she eventually became the wife of one of the relatives of the deceased or of some other man, he would have to purify himself and the woman by killing a ram for its *taatha* (stomach contents), and provide a rawhide bracelet for both of them.

8. During the time that the actual *hukũra* ceremony was taking place for a senior elder in the manner described above, no member of the families of the brothers and patrilineal male cousins of the deceased might have sexual intercourse, nor might they wash in running water, or have their heads shaved. This rule also applied to the families of any married sons of the deceased.

9. Married sons of a deceased elder did not take part in the ceremony of *kũhukũra* at the time of the family ceremonies. At a later date, however, when the main ceremonies were over, they had a full *hukũra* ceremony for their father in their own homes, and performed the required ceremonial sex acts with their senior wife.

Normal Death of a Young Married Man

If a married man who had no grown sons died, he was not buried, but his body was disposed of in one of several other ways.

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In the case of a young married man who died suddenly in his hut and who had no sons of such an age that they were strong enough to carry out his body, the normal procedure was for the entrance of the hut in which he lived to be closed with the hurdle-work door (*riigĩ*) together with large stones and many branches of thorns. Then some of the planks at the back of the hut were removed to make a gap leading out beyond the closed-in fence, and the body was left alone in the hut. That night, or the night after, hyenas would come in through the gap and remove the body. A body disposed of in this simple way was not actually touched by anybody and therefore no one had to be purified immediately with stomach contents. After the lapse of a month, the normal ceremony of *kũhukũra* as already described for an elder, had to take place.

As an alternative, if a man who had no grown sons who could bury him was taken seriously ill, he instructed such sons as he had, to ask for the help of some of his brothers' or male cousins' sons, and they would then carry him out alive to the *kĩbĩrĩra* (area of bush land set aside in that village for the disposal of the dead). Here they lit a fire for him, and if the weather was inclement, built him a temporary shelter. Then the sons took turns watching over their dying father. They removed all his ornaments from him while he was still alive and laid them beside him. When his death took place, the sons left the body there in the bush to be eaten by hyenas, and as they had not touched it, they did not have to be purified with *taatha* (stomach contents), but merely rubbed themselves over the leaves of *ihũithia rĩerũ*, *mũgwata-ng'ondu*, and *mũkengeria*. In due course, the nomal *hukũra* ceremony took place as already described.

Sometimes the body of a married man who had only a few grown-up sons, or perhaps only boys of 14 or 15 was disposed of as follows. He was allowed to die in his hut, and when he was dead, elders were called in to give advice. They directed his young, uninitiated boys to remove his ornaments, and to put his arms and legs into the sleeping position. Then one of the elders gave the sons roots and bark of the plant called *muoha-akuũ*, and told the boys how to use them to bind up the body in the leather garments and sleeping skins of the deceased. Then they were told how to carry out the bundle, and were escorted by the elders to the *kĩbĩrĩra* (place for disposal of the dead). The elders carried a fire-brand with them. At the *kĩbĩrĩra* the bundle containing the body was carefully placed on its right side and in such a way that the man's face was toward his homestead. A fire was lit by the man's side, his ornaments laid by him, and he was left. This was called *gũtwara mũndũ na mwaki* (to carry a person out with fire). The sons who (p.955) had carried the body out had to be purified by the slaughter of a small ram to provide *taatha*, and they had to have their heads shaved straightaway by their respective mothers. This method of disposing of the body of a young married man was used only if the deceased had sons big enough to carry his body.

Disposal of the body in this way could not be carried out until, and unless, all the members of the deceased's family were present, and everyone but the carriers had to remain in the homestead while the body was carried out and disposed of, so that in a sense this was similar to a burial. When the time came, the full *hukũra* ceremonies had to take place as for an elder.

An Unmarried Man

The death of an unmarried, initiated man did not require such complicated ceremonies as those for a married man, and in particular the *hukũra* ceremonies were simplified. The death of an unmarried man was spoken of as *gĩkuũ gĩa thaka* (the death of a *thaka*), and no unmarried man was ever buried. Unless he died so suddenly and unexpectedly that it could not be avoided, no such person was ever allowed to die inside a hut, but when his death was near he was carried out by his brothers or cousins to die in the *kĩbĩrĩra*. They took a fire-brand with them, and when they reached the *kĩbĩrĩra*, they lit a fire, set the dying man down, and sat by him and watched and tended him as long as he lived. When he expired they immediately flexed his legs and his arm into the sleeping position, and arranged him so that he was lying on his right side facing his home. His ornaments were taken off and placed by his side and the fire built up and left burning. Then his brothers took leave of him, after telling him to, "Go on sleeping".

The death of such a person who was carried out alive with fire (*kuumagario na mwaki*—to be escorted with fire), never involved the slaughter of a ram for stomach contents, and the brothers who carried the sick man out and finally put his body into the correct position merely had to rub themselves over with leaves of *mũkengena* and *mũgwata-ng'ondu*. At a somewhat later date, the

man or men who actually touched the dead body to take off the ornaments and flex the legs underwent the purification ceremony of *gũtahĩkio*, conducted by a medicine-man.

After a month had passed, the father and mother of the dead man performed a simplified form of the *hukũra* ceremony for him. On the (p.956) day appointed, the mother prepared some castor oil called *maguta ma ihoru* (oil of loneliness). She cooked it in a potsherd outside and to the left of her hut, and when it was ready she dipped her knuckles into it and anointed her body with it as though it was *tuura*.

On the same day the father sacrificed a small ram as a family sacrifice. (This was not for the ancestral spirits, because the person who had died was an unmarried person, a *thaka*, and he would receive offerings as a spirit only when they were made to a deceased elder). When all the members of the family had shared in this family sacrifice the parents of the dead man went to the mother's hut in the evening (the woman having on her *maguta ma ihoru*, which corresponded to *tuura* in the full ceremony). With all the unmarried members of the mother's family present in the hut, they had ceremonial sexual intercourse once. This was called *gũtheca gĩkuũ* (to have sexual intercourse with death), and it took the place of the ceremony of *gũtheca tuura* (to have sexual intercourse with *tuura*).

The next day was a day of rest (*mũtĩro*), and on the morning of the third day the mother of the deceased prepared castor oil in the normal way, called *maguta ma wega* (oil of good). She anointed herself with this after first having her head completely shaved by a co-wife, and after shaving her husband's head. That night the parents had ceremonial sexual intercourse twice, and the ceremony was over.

If an unmarried man died suddenly in either his father's hut, his own, his mother's hut, or even in the courtyard of the homestead, three or four of his brothers or his classificatory brothers had to be called in to take off his ornaments, flex his limbs, and then wrap his body up in his skin cloak and bind up the bundle with *muoha-akuũ* roots and bark. They then had to carry the bundle out to the *kĩbĩrĩra* and place it there carefully so that the deceased was on his right side facing his home. Before they could enter the homestead again, a small ram had to be slaughtered out in the bush, and they had to wash themselves all over in its stomach contents, after which they all had their heads shaved at once by an old woman past childbearing.

The next day they might do nothing but eat and rest, and on the third day they all had to go down to the stream and rub mud all over their bodies. When it was thoroughly dry they rubbed it off with banana fibre. After this they rubbed their bodies with a piece of raw mutton fat supplied by an elder of the village who was not a relative of the deceased. On the way back from the river they were met by a medicine-man who had been given a small ram by the father of the deceased, and he conducted the men to a nearby stream and here slaughtered the ram and performed the ceremony of *gũtahĩkia*. These (p.957) men and boys then resumed their normal life again, and in due course, after a full month had elapsed, the parents of the deceased performed the modified ceremonial sex act as already described for a man who was unmarried (a *thaka*).

An Elderly Married Woman

Old married women who died during the lives of their husbands and who had grown-up sons were in the normal course of events buried, and not merely carried out and put in the *kĩbĩrĩra*. Such women were always permitted to die peacefully in their own huts, and they were never carried out alive and put in a temporary shelter.

When the death of such a woman took place, all her sons, both married and unmarried, her unmarried daughters, and any uninitiated children, were summoned. Then the eldest son (*irigithathi*) and the youngest son (*kĩhinga-nda*—literally, the one who closes the womb) were appointed to carry out the burial. Even if both of these sons were married they still had to perform this duty for their mother. If they failed in this, her spirit would never forgive them and would always trouble them.

It was the duty of these two sons to arrange the body in the correct sleeping position, take off all her ornaments (this was called *gũcuma*—to strip or take the valuables off someone), and then wrap the body carefully in the skin cloak their mother used to wear, and in her sleeping mat or oxhide. These rites were carried out under the instructions of the dead woman's husband, who collected the roots and bark of the *muoha-akuũ* plant with which to tie up the bundle. The woman's face might not be covered.

Then the two sons had to dig the grave for their mother using a *mũbirũ* sapling obtained in the same way as that described for the burial of an elder, but under the direction of their father instead of an outside council elder.

In all details the method of digging the grave and of burying the body were the same as for an elder except in the following minor points. 1. The woman was buried lying on her left side and not on her right. 2. The grave was not dug near the rubbish midden but in the bush immediately behind the hut of the deceased woman. 3. A dead woman might not be carried out through the main entrance of the homestead, but instead had to be carried out through a gap made in the fence at the side of her hut, and when the body had been buried, the grave-diggers (p.958) had to come back into the homestead through this same gap. 4. No elders were called in to give advice, as her husband was an elder.

After the body had been buried, the men who had dug the grave and carried the body were purified with the stomach contents from a small ram killed for the purpose, and they also had their heads shaved After an interval of one day, they went to the river and further purified themselves by the mud process already described in connection with the disposal of the body of an unmarried man. They were then purified by a medicine-man using the ceremony of *gũtahĩkia*.

This done, they resumed a more or less normal life straight away. However, if they were married they had to sacrifice a ram before resuming normal sexual relations with their wives, and they had to purify themselves and their wives with its stomach contents and put on *ngwaro* (rawhide strips) made of its skin. Unmarried sons, after helping to bury their mother, had to refrain from dancing with girls and from having lovers, even in the restricted form of intercourse known as *nguĩko*, until after the father had performed the ceremony of *kũhukũra* for his deceased wife.

When a month had elapsed, the husband carried out a ceremony of *kũhukũra* for his deceased wife. In most details it was exactly the same as the ceremony performed for an elder, though there were a few important points of divergence: 1. No men were called in as partners for the woman's co-wives, since the husband was alive and would perform the necessary sex acts. 2. These ceremonial sex acts were performed only by the wife next senior to the one who had died; other co-wives of the deceased were not involved. 3. During the eight nights of the *hukũra* ceremonies, all unmarried children of the deceased woman had to sleep in the hut of the next senior wife to their deceased mother, and thus participate by their presence in the ritual acts of "sacrifice" by sexual intercourse. 4. Only the husband, the next senior wife, and the children of the deceased woman and of the co-wife who performed the sex acts wore *ngoka* rings, or took part in the ceremonies in any way.

When the *hukũra* ceremonies for a senior married woman were over, the widower had to slaughter a ram for a family sacrifice and put rawhide strips from it on himself and all his other wives before he could resume normal sexual relations with them.

Married sons of the deceased woman also had to kill a ram and put on rawhide strips before they resumed a normal sex life, but they did not have to wait to do this until the *hukũra* ceremony was over, nor did they perform any *hukũra* ceremony for their mother so as their father was alive. To do so would have been to hasten his death. (p.959) Later, when their father had died, and when the *hukũra* ceremonies for him in his own homestead had been completed, the married sons would perform special *hukũra* ceremonies for him, and then and only then would they also *hukũra* for their deceased mother, joining the names of their father and mother together in the ceremonies when they called upon the spirits.

An Elderly Widow

When a Kikuyu elder had died, the more senior of his wives normally went to live in the homesteads of their married sons. The son built a hut for his mother, provided her with a garden and clothing, and generally became responsible for her welfare. When such a woman died it was not her sons who buried her, but her grandsons, who were her classificatory husbands.

Such a woman was always allowed to die peacefully in her hut, and when she was dead her sons—who by this time were elders—supervised the burial and directed their sons in the methods of digging the grave and disposing of the body. Except that the grave-diggers were the woman's grandsons and not her sons, the details for the burial rites were exactly the same as those already described for a senior married woman whose husband was alive. When the body had been buried, the grandsons were purified with the stomach contents of a ram, and they anointed themselves with mud. Finally, they were *tahĩkio* by a medicine-man, after which they resumed normal life. The fact of their grandmother's death and their participation in the burial ceremonies did not affect them any further once they had been purified, and any ceremonies such as second birth or initiation connected with these grandsons could continue, even though the *hukũra* ceremony had not yet been performed. The sons of the deceased woman, too, were free to continue a normal life unaffected by the death of their mother, until a month had elapsed and the day had arrived to start the *hukũra* ceremonies.

At that time the son in whose homestead the old woman had lived performed a full ceremony of *kũhukũra* with his senior wife, and he joined his father's name with his mother's in the ceremonies to *hukũra* for both of them together. After he had finished his *hukũra* ceremony, the deceased woman's other sons did likewise when a convenient time arrived. They could choose the times for her *hukũra* ceremonies to suit themselves and their family arrangements, and they (p.960) were not in any way bound to a special date, provided that at least one month had elapsed since burial.

An Elderly Married Woman who had no Co-wives

A woman who was the only wife of a Kikuyu elder was never buried no matter how old she might be, but her body was carried out and placed in the *kĩbĩrĩra*. Unless she died suddenly and unexpectedly such a woman was not allowed to die in her hut, but was carried out alive with fire (*kuumagario wa mwaki*—escorted with fire). When she had been laid in the *kĩbĩrĩra* area she was watched over until she died, and then left with a fire burning, as though she was only asleep. Those who had carried her and watched over her did not have to be purified except by brushing

themselves over with *mũkengeria* and *mũgwata-ng'ondu* leaves. The only ceremony that took place was that of *kũhukũra*, in a special, modified form to be described below.

If such a woman died suddenly in her hut, she was carried out by her sons if they were big enough to do so (and if she had any), or by some of her husband's brothers' and male patrilineal cousins' sons. They first wrapped her up in her leather cloak and tied the bundle with roots and bark of *muoha-akuũ* and then carried her out through a gap made in the homestead fence behind the hut. The body was accompanied by a person carrying a fire-brand, and when it had been placed in the *kĩbĩrĩra* a fire was lit by its side and the woman's ornaments laid near it. Then, although the woman was quite dead, they spoke to her and said, "Go on sleeping", thus pretending that she was not yet dead, and so avoiding having to be purified with the stomach contents of a slaughtered animal. They merely had to rub themselves over with the leaves of *ihũithia*, *mũkengeria*, and *mũgwata-ng'ondu*.

The ceremony of *kũhukũra* was not carried out in the ordinary way for a woman who was the only wife of a man, because there was no co-wife who could perform the ceremonial sex acts with the husband. The ceremony was therefore postponed until such time as a senior elder died and was buried somewhere in the neighbouring district. The widower then went at once to the family of the deceased elder and offered his services as a *mwendia-rũhiũ* to perform the ceremonial sex acts in the *hukũra* ceremony with one of the widows of the deceased elder. He did this in order that he might at the same time make use of the opportunity to *hukũra* for his deceased wife.

Having obtained the consent of the family of the deceased man, he waited until they informed him that the *hukũra* ceremony was to start. (p.961) He then went to the homestead where he was to act as a *mwendia-rũhiũ*, taking with him all the unmarried children of his deceased wife. When he had been told which widow he was to partner, he sacrificed a small ram which he had brought for the purpose, and put rawhide strips on his children, on himself, and on the widow who was to be his partner. This done, he put all his children into her hut and they became, for the time being, her adopted children.

While the *hukũra* ceremonies were in progress, the man's children did everything as though they were the widow's children, and they were thus purified from their mother's death by the same sex acts between the widower and widow that purified the widow's children. In this way, by mutual consent and previous arrangement, the *hukũra* ceremony for the deceased elder served also for the deceased woman.

During the ceremony of calling on the spirits, the widower called on his wife and her relations as well as on the relatives of the elder for whom the ceremony had been initiated, and he wore a *ngoka* ring for his wife as well as for the deceased elder. His children wore a *ngoka* ring only for their mother and her relatives.

When the ceremonies had been concluded it was normal for the man to arrange with the widow to live with him as his physical wife, act as mother to his children, and look after him and his family. In return for this, he would look after her, give her food, clothing, gardens, etc. and would act as a father to her children, especially in all matters connected with the rites and ceremonies that had to be performed for them by a man. Any children born of the union would, however, be the legal children of the widow's deceased husband's family and clan. The widow, too, would remain a member of the clan of her deceased husband. The arrangement was merely one of convenience to both parties and was not legally binding should either wish to give it up after a time, nor was there any compulsion to enter into such a union, although it was common practice.

A Young Married Woman

If a young married woman, none of whose sons were old enough to have been initiated, was seriously ill and seemed likely to die, she was not allowed to die in the hut, but was carried out to the *kĩbĩrĩra* by any of her sons who were big enough to do so, even though they were not yet initiated. If she had no such sons, she was carried by the sons of her co-wives, or, failing that, by sons of her husband's brothers and male (p.962) patrilineal cousins. A fire was lit for her and she was watched over and tended until she died.

If, on the other hand, she died suddenly in her hut, she had to have her ornaments taken off and her body wrapped in her clothes and sleeping skin. This bundle, tied with *muoha-akuũ* root bark, had to be carried out by her sons, if any were big enough to do so, or by some of her classificatory sons.

In this case there was no fiction of referring to her as asleep. When the body had been disposed of by placing it in the sleeping position on its left side facing the home, those who had helped to wrap her up and carry her out had to be purified with the stomach contents from a small ram killed for the purpose, and they had to have their heads shaved, wash in mud, and later be *tahĩkio* by a medicine-man. This concluded their purification, except that any actual sons who helped had to take part in the *hukũra* ceremony later.

In the case of such a young married woman who had no initiated sons, the husband did not perform the *hukũra* ceremony with the next senior wife to the deceased, even if there was one. He postponed the *hukũra* ceremony until he heard of the death of an elder, and then he offered his services as a *mwendia-rũhiũ* and so purified himself and the widow of the elder as described above.

The difference, however, was that in these circumstances he might be a man with other wives, and if this was the case he did not then enter into a special arrangement with the widow after the *hukũra* ceremonies were over, but had no more to do with her. On his return home he placed the children of the deceased woman under the care of one of his other wives. In order to do this without risking their contaminating her and her own children, he had to sacrifice a ram and put rawhide strips on himself, the wife who was going to adopt the children, the children themselves, and all the children of the adopting mother.

From this point onwards the woman who had thus adopted the children of her deceased co-wife took the place of their dead mother in all respects, and became responsible for cooking for them, feeding them, and for all ceremonies and rites connected with them.

A Young Widow

As we have already seen, when an elder died, those of his wives who had married sons went to live at the homes of those sons. Those who had no married sons, but one of whose sons had been initiated, usually (p.963) went with that son to set up a home somewhere. Young widows who had no grown-up sons, however, were usually inherited by one of the younger brothers or classificatory brothers of the former husband. They went to live in his homestead and he inherited all responsibilities for the widow, although he did not take her as a physical wife unless she wished it. She might, if she liked, have lovers of her own choice, but she was nevertheless the responsibility of the man who had inherited her.

If such an inherited widow died while she was still young and had no grown-up sons, the disposal of her body was the responsibility of the man who inherited her. He did not, however, touch her body himself, but arranged for some of his own sons or his own classificatory sons to wrap up her

body and carry it out. Moreover, it was the man who had inherited her who had to perform the *hukũra* ceremonies to purify her children and himself from the effects of her death, even though he might never have been her physical husband, and was not her legal husband either. On her death, this man had to perform the *hukũra* ceremony for her by offering himself as a *mwendia-rũhiũ* in an elder's homestead in the way that has been described above, and he took her children to be purified in conjunction with those of the widow whom he was to partner.

A woman who had been inherited after her husband's death did not, however, take part in the *hukũra* ceremony if the man who had inherited her died, for she was not his wife at all, any more than she was the legal wife of the man she took as lover to beget children for her deceased husband.

An Unmarried Initiated Girl

If an unmarried, initiated girl was dying, or if she died suddenly, her body was disposed of in the same way as that of an unmarried man. Such a death was also a *gĩkuũ gĩa thaka*, and the only *hukũra* ceremony required was the modified one already described for a male *thaka*.

An Uninitiated Boy or Girl

Oncc Kikuyu children had been through the second birth ceremony they ranked as full members of the community, and when these (p.964) children died they were treated as *thaka*, and their bodies were disposed of in the same way as for unmarried, initiated men and women.

A Child

As we have already seen several times, until he or she had been through the second birth ceremony, a child was still regarded as a part of its mother. When, therefore, such a child died, he or she was not an individual member of the community that had passed away, but a human infant that had no separate identity. At death, the bodies of such children were carried out and placed in the *kĩbĩrĩra* by the mother, and never by brothers or classificatory brothers. The mother was then shaved and a medicine-man was called in to *tahĩkia* her (cleanse her ceremonially). She and the child's father performed the simplified form of *hukũra* in order to cleanse the mother.

Recovery of a Person who had been Carried out to die in the Kĩbĩrĩra

In the foregoing pages mention has been made several times of the practice of carrying a dying person out of the homestead in order that death might not occur there, and that the dead body might not have to be touched. Sometimes it happened that a person so carried out did not die, but managed to recover. He or she was then watched and nursed out there, in the *kĩbĩrĩra*, until complete recovery was certain. Then the person was brought back again.

This could be done only with due ceremony, for the person had been given up as certain to die, and therefore could be brought back only if a family sacrifice of thanksgiving took place. For this, a ram or a virgin ewe was slaughtered by the head of the family, and the meat of this animal was eaten by all living members of the family, while some of the blood was poured out to the ancestral spirits. The sacrifice was called *igongona rĩa gũcokia mũndũ mũciĩ* (a sacrifice to return the person to his or her home), and the person who had returned from the brink of death was welcomed back by all the family.

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Special Matters connected with Normal Death

Death of an Elder or Young Married Man

When an elder or young married man died, and before he was actually taken from the hut to be buried, all of the more important moveable objects in his hut were taken out and carried to the hut of his senior widow in order that they might be purified there by means of the *kũhukũra* ceremony, and subsequently made use of by members of the family. Objects so treated included his spear, sword, shield, wooden barrel used as a safe, honey drums, and other such objects of value. Things like stones and clubs were not taken. Perishable things like stores of honey, unground tobacco leaf, hornfuls of rendered down fat, etc. were also removed, and placed under the eaves of the hut of one of his widows. These were made use of and divided up during the time that the *hukũra* ceremonies were in progress, and they all had to be dispersed before the eighth day.

When the *hukũra* ceremonies started, all those who were taking part helped each day to pull out a few of the wall planks and roof supports of the hut in which the death took place, so that by the eighth day of the ceremonies the roof collapsed inwards on the ruins of the hut, and the *mũrarĩ* (soot on the inside of the thatch) fell to the ground inside. The poles and planks that were taken from the hut each day during the *hukũra* ceremonies were used to keep a fire burning in the centre of the courtyard. Any timber left over after the ceremonies had been completed might be used as firewood for fires lit in the courtyard or in the entrance area, but not for fires inside any hut. On no account might any wood from a hut in which a man had died be used for building any other hut, nor might it ever be used for cooking purposes.

A short time after the *hukũra* ceremony had been completed, arrangements had to be made by the sons or by the junior brother who was the heir, to move the whole homestead to a new site. This was *called gũthamĩra gĩkuũ* (to move away from death). This move was only a ceremonial one and the homestead did not need to be moved more than a few 100ft, but every hut had to be moved except the one that had been pulled down and destroyed. The most important consideration was that the whole move had to be completed in a single day.

p.966
Death of a Married Woman

When a married woman died, her more valuable property, such as saddle quern, the better cooking pots, food safe, pestle, mortar, and her agricultural tools were transferred to the hut of the next senior wife or in some cases the next junior), in order that they might be purified by means of the *hukũra* ceremony. If a woman had no co-wives, her possessions were abandoned in her hut and never used again.

As far as the hut of a woman was concerned, when the owner died one of two things could be done according to the decision of her husband, or if she had been a widow, by the son or brother-in-law who was responsible for her. He could gather every member of his household and together they could pull the whole hut down at once, as soon as the body had been disposed of and if this was done, every plank, pole, piece of thatch, and all the hearthstones were carried out by way of the main entrance of the homestead and deposited in the bush in a pile to rot and decay. The place where the hut had stood was then brushed and left vacant for evermore. Alternatively, the man responsible could ordain that the hut be left intact until after the *hukũra* ceremony had been performed, and then he could move the whole of his homestead a 100 yards or so, leaving the hut of the deceased standing deserted. Such a deserted hut was called a *kĩĩgĩĩgĩ* (a hut deserted because of death). It could not be left standing indefinitely, but had to be burnt by a stranger to the district, who was obtained for this purpose and who was paid a special fee to set fire to the deserted hut one night after everyone had gone to bed. If such a hut was left standing unburnt for too long, the

warrior leaders of the district could come and exact a fine from the man responsible for allowing the hut to remain standing.

Deaths of Unmarried, or Childless People

The death of any person who was unmarried or childless (a *thaka*), or an infant who had not been through the second birth ceremony, was never an occasion for a hut to be abandoned or the homestead moved, even if such a death took place inside a hut. This was because the hut was not owned by the deceased, and therefore not so closely associated with that person as a woman's hut was with her, or a man's with him. All that happened when such a person died in a hut was that, after the modified *hukũra* ceremony had been performed by the parents, (p.967) and when the parents were visited by a medicine-man to *tahĩkia* them, he was asked to purify the hut at the same time, by sprinkling *taatha* mixed with his magic powders and by sweeping out the hut ceremonially.

As to the personal property of such a *thaka*, the ornaments which were on his or her person at death were taken olf and put with the corpse out in the *kĩbĩrĩra*, but other property, such as swords, shields, spears, digging knives, string bags, etc. were not considered to have been contaminated, and therefore these things did not have to be purified in any way, nor were they thrown away, but instead were given to friends (other than close relatives) of the deceased. The reason for this was said to be that if they were given to close relatives the mother of the deceased would see them frequently and be constantly reminded of the death of her son or daughter.

Abnormal Deaths of Kikuyu Guild Members

So far we have considered exclusively the method of disposing of bodies of people who had died a normal and natural death, and we must now turn to the way that the bodies of people who died abnormal and unnatural deaths were treated.

Deaths due to Violence

From the Kikuyu point of view, a death counted as a violent death only if the person died very soon after the violence was committed. Thus a person who was speared or clubbed and who did not die from his wounds until some days later was not said to have died a violent death at all, but a normal one, and his body was disposed of in the usual way. Violent deaths were all grouped together by the Kikuyu as *gĩkuũ gĩa itimũ* (death from a spear), and the person who died a violent death was *mũndũ wa itimũ* (a man of the spear), although the death might have been caused by some other agency.

Deaths caused by the following ranked as *gĩkuũ gĩa itimũ*: spears, swords, arrows, clubs; the teeth, claws, or horns of wild animals, falling branches of trees or trees that were being felled; game pits, rock or earth falls, and fire. Death by lightning was regarded as caused (p.968) by God, but the body was treated like that of a person killed by ordinary violence.

A person whose immediate death was caused by any of these things was never touched and no ornaments were ever removed, and the corpse was left exactly where it fell, and not put into the sleeping position. Even if the violent death took place inside the homestead the body was left exactly as and where it fell, and the gates of the homestead were left open that night so that hyenas might come in and drag it away.

After a death due to violence had occurred, the ordinary *hukũra* ceremonies took place in whatever form was required by the status of the deceased. The fact that death was due to violence did not

require any modification whatever of the *hukũra* ceremonies. The huts of married men and women who died a violent death away from home were destroyed after the *hukũra* ceremony had taken place. The bare fact of the death of the owner of the hut was in itself enough to contaminate the hut, even though the death took place at a distance.

The belongings of a person who died by violence, other than ornaments that were being worn at the time of death, were treated as in the case of a normal death.

Death by Drowning

Death by drowning did not rank as an ordinary violent death, but as a special case involving special rules. If any person was caught in a torrential river and drowned, and the body was subsequently discovered, those relatives who would have been responsible for the disposal of the body if the death had been normal had to take the body out of the water at once and bring it to the bank.

Having done so, they did not remove the ornaments, nor did they put the body in the sleeping position. They merely laid it on the bank and then brought a small ram or a virgin ewe to the spot and slaughtered it there. They rubbed the stomach contents of the animal over themselves and cast what was left of it into the river at the spot where the body had been discovered. All this was done under the direct supervision of a few senior council elders. Then the people who recovered the body had to have their heads shaved, and be purified further by the ceremony of *gũtahĩkia* by a medicine-man. After at least a month had elapsed, the *hukũra* ceremonies appropriate to the status of the deceased were carried out in the normal way.

p.969

Death by Suicide

Suicide was by no means unknown among the Kikuyu, and the commonest means adopted for committing suicide was by hanging. Usually the sites chosen by suicidal people for hanging themselves were trees well away from their homes, so that the body would not be found too soon, and so that they should not be seen preparing themselves and thus be prevented from taking their own lives.

When such a body was found and identified, one of the people who, in normal circumstances, would have had to dispose of it climbed the tree under the supervision of a council elder, and cut the rope so that the body fell to the ground. If it fell without any limb being broken, then all the ornaments were taken off and the body was laid carefully in the sleeping position at the spot where it fell. If, however, in falling, any limb of the corpse was broken, no ornaments were removed and no one touched the body to put it in the sleeping position, for it then ranked as a death due to violence. In either case, after the body had been cut down, the man who had cut it down had to set to work to dig up the tree, roots and all. If it was a big tree, this task might take days, but nevertheless it had to be done.

When the tree had been uprooted, a ram had to be brought and sacrificed on the spot where the tree stood, and its stomach contents sprinkled all over the area. The man who had cut down the body and dug up the tree of death also had to wash himself all over in some of the stomach contents. Then he had to take a quantity of soda and put this all over the ground where the tree had stood, so as to make the ground so "bitter" that no suckers or roots would ever spring up and replace it.

When his task was done, the man was shaved, and a day later he was *tahĩkio* by a medicine-man. Then, after a due interval, the ceremony of *kũhukũra* took place in the form appropriate to the status of the deceased person.

When women wished to commit suicide, they usually hanged themselves from one of the roof supports of their huts. When such a suicide was discovered, the custom in some districts was for the body to be cut down by the person who in normal circumstances would have been responsible for burying or otherwise disposing of it. No ornaments were taken off the body, nor was it laid out. Once the body had been cut down, the doorway was blocked up with thorns and stones and a hole made in the wall of the back of the hut so that hyenas could enter (p.970) it at night to carry away and devour the body. The person who had cut the body down had to be purified with *taatha*, have his head shaved and go through the *tahĩkia* ceremony. Then a stranger had to be paid a fee to come and pull down the hut; he left the thatch and poles in a mound where the hut had stood. Later, after the ceremony of *kũhukũra* had been duly performed, the whole homestead was moved, except for the debris of the hut, which was secretly burnt at night by a stranger for a fee.

In other districts and families, if a woman committed suicide by hanging herself in her hut, the body was cut down by the people who would normally have disposed of it, and it was then wrapped up in her skin cloak arid carried out to the *kĩbĩrĩra* in the ordinary way. The ornaments were removed before the body was carried, and were placed with it when it was laid down. In such cases, these same people had to pull down the hut before they underwent the purification ceremony and had their heads shaved. In this case, too, the normal *hukũra* ceremony was performed in due course.

If an unmarried or childless person (a *thaka*) committed suicide by hanging herself or himself on a tree or in a hut, the body was cut down and disposed of by carrying it out to the *kĩbĩrĩra*. Then, after the ceremony of *kũhukũra* had been performed in the modified way used for *thaka*, the hut was purified by a medicine-man, who also purified the parents. The hut continued to be occupied until the whole homestead was moved for some other reason. Then that hut was abandoned and none of the building materials (except the hurdlework door) were used for a new hut. The hut then became a *kĩĩgĩĩgĩ* (a hut deserted because of death), and was burnt as soon as a stranger could be found to do so for a fee.

Occasionally a man committed suicide by falling on his spear or his sword. Such a death counted as a death due to violence, and the body was left where it fell and the ornaments were not removed, but the *kũhukũra* ceremony took place in due course.

Death while Visiting another Homestead

Any person taken ill while away on a visit was, if possible, taken home lest he or she should die in someone else's homestead. Sometimes, however, a person died suddenly in the homestead of a friend, and if this happened a message had to be sent at once to summon the deceased's relatives. On hearing of the death, they had to go over with (p.971) the people who would normally have been responsible for the disposal of the body. If the distance was not too great, a litter was made and the dead body was carried back to the deceased's own home, so that it might be disposed of from there in the way that was appropriate to the status or position of the dead person. In fact, the body was treated as though asleep until it had reached home. In spite of this fiction, the relatives had to take a ram to the homestead where the death had occurred, and this was then slaughtered by a medicine-man and its stomach contents used to purify the hut and the homestead from the contagion of death.

If such a death took place when a person was a very long way from home, the body was treated as asleep by the owners of the homestead, while a message was sent to those who would normally be responsible for disposing of the body. These people, knowing that the distance was too great to

carry the body home, had to take a little earth from the place where the body would have been buried at home (if the person who had died was of a status requiring burial). When they arrived at the place where the dead body was sleeping they obtained permission to bury it on the land of that family, but they placed some of the soil they had brought with them at both the bottom of the grave and the top, so that the body was "buried in family soil". Should the deceased be a person whose status did not require burial, they merely obtained permission to carry out the body and dispose of it in the local *kĩbĩrĩra*. The purification and *hukũra* ceremonies were normal.

Deaths during a Smallpox Epidemic

At times, when serious fatal epidemics such as smallpox were killing large numbers of people in every village, all burial ceremonies and ceremonies connected with the disposal of the dead were suspended, and no one would, in any circumstances, touch a dead body to put it into the correct position or to remove its ornaments and lay them by the side of the corpse. Those who died suddenly inside a homestead or in a hut were left where they died, and if it was a hut, a hole was opened in the back of the wall for hyenas to come and take the body. Those who were recognisably suffering from the disease were made to go out into the bush, where a temporary hut was built for them, and they were left to look after themselves, or were looked after by an immune person. If they died, their bodies were in due course taken by hyenas. But if a person was left alone in a hut in the bush and food (p.972) taken and placed at a distance, no one would go close to see if the person was dying or dead, for "there was fear in all the land", and it was a case of everyone for himself. Later, after the epidemic had passed the survivors of each family arranged for a *hukũra* ceremony at which they made *ngoka* rings for every deceased person and put out offerings to their spirits. They also purified all the survivors together from the contagion of the combined deaths.

Deaths due to Famine

When a really serious famine occurred, and people were dying by the hundreds all over the country, all the normal death ceremonies were suspended, as was the case when an epidemic of smallpox was raging. No one was strong enough for the tasks of burial and carrying bodies out to the *kĩbĩrĩra*, and family members were all scattered looking for food and therefore could not be gathered together for the ceremonies. Only after the famine was over and plenty of food was again available did the survivors take steps to *hukũra* for those who had died.

Death in connection with Matrilineal Families

As we have already seen in the chapter on marriage, the commonest form of legal union for the sexes was a patrilineal and patrilocal marriage which was sealed by the handing over of marriage insurance payments. There were, however, other forms of recognised legal union which were variations of matrilineal and matrilocal marriages. When we examine the death ceremonies of people who had been married in matrilineal marriages, we find that these throw important light on the Kikuyu attitude toward such marriages.

A serf was sometimes given one of the daughters of his wealthy patron as his wife on a matrilineal basis. If such a man died, his body was not buried, but was carried out to the *kĩbĩrĩra* by some of the sons of the wealthy man, who were then purified from having touched a dead body. The death did not in any way make the woman who was the serf's wife unclean, and no *hukũra* ceremony took place at all, for neither the woman who was merely his physical wife nor the children who were only his physical children were in any way defiled by the (p.973) death of a husband married matrilineally, any more than a woman was defiled by the death of a casual lover. Even the hut in

which the two had lived was not seriously defiled by the death of the serf. It was not destroyed or pulled down, but merely purified by being swept out with *taatha* by a medicine-man.

If a woman who was the matrilineal wife of a serf died, it was not her physical husband who performed the ceremony of *kũhukũra* to purify her children, but her father. He did so with her mother if she was alive, or with some other wife, in order to purify the children of his deceased daughter. The serf who had been her husband was not made unclean by her death, because it was a matrilineal marriage.

In the case of a serf whose patron had provided him with a wife by making marriage payments to another family, the position was different. By making the marriage payments for his serf, the patron had to all intents and purposes made the serf his son. Therefore, although the children born of such a union belonged to the family clan of the patron and not to that of the serf, if the latter died, a ceremony of *kũhukũra* was performed for him by his wife, who was provided with a *mwendia-rũhiũ* for the performance of the ceremony so that she could purify herself and her children.

Similarly, if a woman who had been married in this way to a serf died, and if the latter, who was her physical husband, had another wife as well, he performed a *hukũra* ceremony for the deceased woman with his other wife, thereby purifying himself and his children. If he had no other wife, he took the children to some place where a *hukũra* ceremony for an elder was to be performed, and became a *mwendia-rũhiũ* in order to *hukũra* for his wife and purify her children and himself.

In the case of a girl who never married but who had a hut built for her in her father's or brother's homestead, and who produced children by one or more lovers of her own choice, the death of any such lover did not affect either the girl or the physical children of that lover. If the girl died, her father and mother had to *hukũra* for her, or if they were dead, her brother and one of his wives.

If a Buried Person was dug up by Hyenas

Although the Kikuyu had not the slightest objection to a human body being eaten by hyenas, and in fact regarded it as the normal end for all those who were placed in the *kĩbĩrĩra*, it was regarded as a serious matter if a body that had been buried in accordance with recognised burial customs was subsequently disinterred by a hyena. Unless some action (p.974) was taken immediately, the spirit of the deceased would be very angry and would disturb the living relatives in all kinds of ways.

If, therefore, it was found that a hyena had dug up a buried corpse a council of elders was summoned, and on their instructions the stem of a banana tree was prepared. This was then very carefully buried in the original grave by the people who had performed the original burial rites. It represented the deceased, and after it had been buried a ram was slaughtered and those who did the burying purified their hands in its stomach contents and sprinkled the rest of them on the grave. By burying a banana tree stem to replace the corpse the spirit was appeased.

Special Burial Instructions

Sometimes before an elder died he issued special instructions to his sons as to where he was to be buried. Not infrequently he stated that he was to be buried at some distant place where he had formerly lived and where he owned land. This was in particular true of elders who were living on an estate that belonged to someone else.

If such instructions were given, those who were responsible for the burial were in duty bound to obey them if it was at all possible. If it was impossible for any reason, they had to consult with the

council elders in order to decide what alternative to use without offending the spirit of the deceased. Great ingenuity was shown by the elders in devising alternative plans that fulfilled the spirit if not the letter of the instructions. One example will suffice. There is an historical case of an elder who gave implicit instructions that at death he was to be buried on the Ngong Hills in Maasai country, and he further strengthened this order by leaving a deathbed curse to the effect that unless his wish was fulfulled his sons would not benefit from the stock and other wealth that they inherited from him. Circumstances at the time of his death were such that an attempt to carry him to Ngong and bury him there would have meant death for the whole burial party, as the Maasai were at war with the Kikuyu and in force on the Ngong Hills. The elders of the council were consulted, and as a result of their deliberations, the heirs were sent by night to Ngong with big string bags which, in darkness, they stealthily filled with soil from the slopes of the Ngong Hills. On their return a grave was dug and this soil was put in the bottom, round the sides, and finally over the body· The body was thus buried "on the top of the Ngong Hills" to all intents and purposes!

p.975

Normal Death of an Ūkabi Guild Member

The ceremonies and purification connected with death and disposal of the dead were simpler among members of the Ũkabi guild than among members of the Kikuyu guild. The most notable difference and modification was connected with the ceremony of *kũhukũra*. As we have already noted, the major difference in the initiation ceremonies of the Kikuyu and the Ũkabi guilds was that the former were punctuated by ceremonial sex acts which were of a sacrificial nature, while among the latter the sacrificial act was not sexual, but a simple ritual with a necklace. In the *hukũra* ceremonies, whereas the rites of the Kikuyu were punctuated by ceremonial sex acts, the members of the Ũkabi guild had a simple ceremony with the milk and blood of an animal.

Normal Death

A Senior Elder

When an elder who belonged to the Ũkabi initiation guild died, messages were at once sent to summon all the members of his family, and instead of only one or two elders being called in for consultation as was the case for Kikuyu guild members, all the council elders of his own generation age-group who lived in the vicinity were notified. These elders of the deceased's age-group performed a dual function. They gave advice as to the way the body was to be buried, and they came to eat the ox that was called *ndegwa ya kũgaya gĩtonga* (the ox for dividing up [the property of] the rich man). If the cider who had died was not very rich, a big he-goat was substituted for the ox.

As soon as the sons of the deceased assembled, and while the elders were slaughtering and eating the ox, a second animal was killed for- the family. This was called *ndegwa ya gũthika mũthuuri* (the ox for burying the elder). If the elder was not very wealthy, a ram was substituted for the ox.

When the council elders had finished eating the first ox or he-goat they gave instructions for the digging of the grave, the wrapping of die body, etc. and the details of these matters were the same as those for an elder's burial under Kikuyu initiation guild rules. Unless the (p.976) elder died very suddenly indeed, all the personal ornaments on his body were taken off him when he was *in extremis*, and each one of his sons was given one of these ornaments—a ring, a bracelet, an anklet, a neck ornament, an earring, etc.—which he put on at once. If, however, death took place so

suddenly that the man's ornaments were on him when he actually died, they were removed by the sons who wrapped up his body and dug the grave, and placed in the grave with him.

When the body had been carried out and put into the grave, the skin of the ox or ram that was killed for the family was laid over the body, and the grave was filled up with earth, stones, and thorns. Every son, from the eldest to the youngest, had to pick a leafy branch of a thorny plant such as *mũgaa* or *mũtũra* as his contribution to the burial of his father.

After the body had been buried, those sons who had dug the grave, wrapped the body, and carried it, had a small ram killed for them, and washed their hands in its stomach contents. They also had their heads shaved. Next day a he-goat, called *thenge ya kũnungũra mũciĩ* (a he-goat to remove the smell from the homestead), was slaughtered and eaten by all the descendants of the deceased, male and female, and by his widows. The limb bones were broken off and the marrow was extracted and rubbed over the bodies of the grave-diggers.

When the feast was over, the family of the deceased resumed normal life until the time came for the *hukũra* ceremonies. However, no one might have sexual intercourse with anyone, and, as in the Kikuyu guild ceremonies, the rule also applied to the stock of the deceased. The he-goats were castrated and bulls and rams kept from the females. Unlike the Kikuyu guild, however, all the furniture and property of the deceased was left in his hut until the time came for the *hukũra* ceremonies; it was not taken over to his senior widow's hut. A new moon had to appear before the *hukũra* ceremonies could start, and during this interval all honey and fat that had belonged to the deceased had to be used up completely. Elders of the same generation as the deceased came in to help the family consume this honey.

When the month was over, the family brewed honey beer and invited all the local elders to come and drink it, and they asked for instructions as to how to carry out the *hukũra* ceremony. When they had consumed the beer, the elders said that the family had to brew more beer and have it ready on such-and-such a day. Then the elders would return to tell the family how to carry out the *hukũra* ceremonies· "We of the Ũkabi guild only give these instructions when beer has been brewed for us twice". The family was warned that on the day (p.977) this second beer feast was held, all the family had to be assembled and ready to start the *hukũra* ceremonies. They were to obtain and keep ready for that day a ram that was either all black or of the colour known as *kĩmũkũyũ* (a uniform brown colour), and it had to be one that had not had its tail docked. Moreover, the tail had to be straight and not turned up at the end. On the night before the second beer feast it was to be tethered to the bedpost of the senior widow. This ram was called *ndũrũme ya kũhukũra* (the ram for the *hukũra* ceremonies).

The Ceremony of Kũhukũra

First Day

On the morning chosen for the second beer feast and the start of the ceremonies, when the elders and the whole family had assembled, the elders drank their beer, which was only a small amount for purely ceremonial purposes. Then they instructed the sons of the deceased to slaughter the ram. When it had been strangled and partially skinned, its blood was drawn off, mixed with fresh milk, and put into a large bottle gourd. This *ngĩbũtũ* (milk mixed with fresh blood) would be used in the evening for a "sacrifice". Every member of the family had to transpose all ear ornaments at this time, putting them from the right ear to the left and *vice versa*. When the skin of the ram had been removed, it was laid on the ground hair side downwards, and the meat was cut up and laid on the

skin. Great care had to be taken not to allow any meat to touch the hair of the skin. If it did, another ram had to be killed to take its place.

While the joints were being cut up, some of the fat was rendered down, and then the younger brother or younger patrilineal male cousin of the deceased, who was to be the leader of the *hukũra* ceremonies, and all the widows, had their heads shaved. This done, each of them anointed his or her head and body with the rendered down fat.

The meat of the slaughtered ram was divided up as follows: the joints of one side were eaten by members of the family, and one whole side and the skin were given to one of the council elders, who had to take it away at once and distribute it among the members of his own family. The head, feet, stomach, and intestines were given to a young, unmarried man who might not be a relation or relative-in-law, and he had to take them away at once and eat them at some other homestead.

After the ram had been slaughtered and its meat consumed, all (p.978) the furniture and movable property of the deceased—his snuff boxes honey drums, drinking horns, stools, etc.—were brought out into the courtyard and anointed with some of the ram's fat. Then each widow and each son who was present took one of these objects and by so doing identified himself or herself more closely with the deceased during the *hukũra* ceremonies.

The council elders then demanded that the skin of a young male goat be produced. (The family had known this would be requested and had one ready.) The elders scraped off all the hair and cut the skin into strips, each of which was anointed with some of the fat of a ram mixed with charcoal, which was made from charring and grinding sugar-cane peel and *mũhũtĩ* wood in a potsherd. These bits of skin (*ndamĩ*) took the place of the *ngoka* rings in the Kikuyu guild rites, but in the Ũkabi guild each widow was given only one of these bits to represent her dead husband, and did not have others for previously deceased members of the family. Some of these bits of skin were given to the eldest unmarried son of each widow, and to the younger brother or male cousin of the deceased who was the leader of the ceremonies. These bits of skin were slung on a small thong of leather and worn under the right arm near the armpit, with the blackened side of the skin next to the body. This was called *kũgarũra nguo* (turning the cloak), and it symbolized the wearing of all clothing inside out, which formerly had been the custom in connection with these ceremonies. When darkness fell, and when all the stock of the homestead had been put into their respective huts, each widow was given a small bottle gourd containing some of the milk and blood mixture, and she and all the unmarried members of her family repaired to her hut. The man who was the leader of the ceremonies went to the hut of the senior widow.

The senior widow handed her gourd of blood and milk to the leader of the ceremonies, the two of them sitting together on her bed, and he drank some of it and gave the gourd to her to drink some. The senior unmarried son then drank as well. This was called *kũnyua ngĩbũtũ* (to drink *ngĩbũtũ*), and was the Ũkabi guild equivalent of the ceremonial sex act of the Kikuyu guild. In the other huts each widow drank from the gourd with her senior unmarried son.

Married sons who had been present during the day took home some of the milk and blood mixture and drank it with their senior wives in their own homes, thus performing the ceremony on behalf of their deceased father at the same time as his widows. Any married sons who lived at a great distance and who returned home after the burial did not have to come back for the *hukũra* ceremonies, but a message was (p.979) sent to them telling them of the day fixed for the start of the ceremonies, and that night each had to kill a ram of his own, mix the blood with milk, and drink this with his senior wife, so as to participate in the *hukũra* ceremonies.

Each person who had drunk milk and blood then took off his bit of skin, put it in an empty water jar, and covered it over for the night. This was to prevent any possibility of rats or mice touching it at night, for if this happened it would cause the ceremonies to be annulled and they would have to start again, particularly if a rat nibbled a piece out of one of the bits of skin.

Second Day

On the morning of the second day each person put on his or her bit of skin again and the day was spent doing nothing but eating and lying about; it was a day of *mũtĩro*. On the evening of the second day when they had all returned to bed, each person wearing a bit of skin had to keep it on, put it well into his or her armpit, and lie on it, so that rats could not get at it.

Third Day

Early in the morning of the third day every person who had been wearing one of the bits of skin had to go out into the bush and secretly hide it where it would never be found. Then they went to the nearest river to wash themselves all over before returning to the homestead, where they anointed their bodies with red ochre mixed with water.

Any widow of the deceased who was not only past childbearing, but whose youngest child had already been initiated, did not take part in the ceremonies of drinking blood and milk and wearing a bit of skin, and on this third morning when the others put red ochre mixed with water on their bodies, she anointed herself with *thiriũ*. This was a special word, used only in this connection, and it referred to the fat of the ram slaughtered on the first day of the *hukũra* ceremonies. The rest of the day was again spent in idleness and in eating, and no work might be done.

All the ear ornaments which had been changed over from the right ear to the left and *vice versa* on the first clay of the ceremonies were changed back again on the afternoon of the third day.

p.980
Fourth Day

According to the rules of the Ũkabi initiation guild, the *hukũra* ceremonies came to an end on the fourth day, which was the day of *ndoro* (mud). All the friends and relatives came to visit the family of the deceased, bringing with them presents of beer, rams, he-goats, and food of all kinds, and the family and visitors participated in a great feast to celebrate the end of the mourning and of the *hukũra* ceremonies. Everyone was then purified from the contagion of death, and as soon as possible each widow and her family was further purified by the ceremony of *gũtahĩkia* conducted by a medicine-man.

One more month had to elapse, however, before anyone was allowed to have sexual intercourse. Then, when the next full moon was reached, the younger brother or male cousin of the deceased who was the leader of the ceremonies went to the widow with whom he had drunk the blood and milk and had ceremonial sexual intercourse with her twice in one night. After an interval of a day or two, men of the Ũkabi guild who were personal friends of the deceased were invited to come and have ceremonial sexual intercourse with the other widows. This was done in strict order of precedence, and with an interval of a day or two between each ceremony.

***The Ceremony of Gũtindĩka Mũthuuri* (*Literally, to push the Elder*)**

After the ceremonial sex acts described above were completed (they were the only ones in the whole ceremony as conducted by the Ũkabi guild), the ceremony of *gũtindĩka mũthuuri* took place,

which corresponded to the Kikuyu guild ceremony of making offerings to the departed spirits on the first day of the *hukũra* rites.

To perform this ceremony the man who was the leader of the *hukũra* ceremonies called in two council elders, who came with their senior wives. A procession was formed of these two men and their wives, all the widows of the deceased, and the leader of the *hukũra* ceremonies. They took with them one small, uncastrated, young he-goat and a *mũcema* gourd of honey beer, and in addition each widow carried potsherds with small quantities of all the various cereals and beans, etc. while the men carried a few yams and sweet potatoes, a stick o sugar-cane, and a few green bananas.

p.981
When the procession left the homestead, care was taken to leave the door of each hut open and a fire burning brightly inside. As the procession started, the dead man's spirit was addressed by name, and was invited by his senior widow to accompany the procession. When the procession had gone some distance into the bush, the elders stopped before a *mũthakwa* or *mũkeũ* bush or tree, and here the goat was slaughtered by the two elders, and its meat and skin carefully divided into two equal parts.

A fire was lit from a fire-brand brought by one of the elders, and some of the meat was roasted and eaten by all those present. At the same time each called upon *andũ aitũ maakuire* (our people who died [who are in the bush]) to come and partake of the feast. They did not call upon individuals by name, however, as did the Kikuyu guild people.

When the living had eaten their share of this communion feast, the rest of the meat was carefully divided and put into the two halves of the skin, between which were laid the sticks used to make the roasting platform. The whole pile was put at the foot of the bush where the animal had been slaughtered, and the breast (*gĩthũri*) was hung up in the bush. The beer and the food were also laid by the foot of the tree, and then the two elders invoked his spirit and those of other dead members of the family, to come and share these offerings. At the same time they begged them to stay in peace and not to come back to the homestead to worry those who were still alive.

The whole procession then went back to the homestead, where they brought the ceremony to an end by drinking some of the honey beer reserved for this purpose from the brew offered to the ancestral spirits.

The hut in which the deceased had died was not pulled down, and male members of the family continued to live in it. After a short interval, however, the whole homestead was moved, including the hut in which the elder had died, and it was re-erected in the new homestead.

Normal Deaths

A Middle-aged Elder

In the Ũkabi guild not all elders were buried; many of them were treated like junior married men in the Kikuyu guild, that is to say, their bodies were taken out to the *kĩbĩrĩra* and left there for hyenas to (p.982) eat. The details of the ceremonies did not otherwise differ greatly from those for a burial.

Very often in the Ũkabi guild an elder was not allowed to die in his hut, and when he was ill he was carried out into the bush, where a temporary hut was built for him and where he was tended and nursed by his sons. In such cases, when life passed, the body was put into the sleeping position

in the temporary hut and left there instead of being carried to the *kĩbĩrĩra*. No matter how an elder's body was disposed of the *hukũra* ceremonies and those of *gũtindĩka mũthuuri* were always the same as those described above.

If an elder who had been taken out to a temporary hut in the bush recovered, he was brought home again and a ram was slaughtered for a sacrifice of thanksgiving on his safe return from a close brush with death.

An Elderly Married Woman

The body of a senior married woman who had grown sons and whose husband was living was always buried, and the details of the ceremonies connected with her burial differed from those for the burial of an elder only in the following minor details. 1. She was buried on her left side and behind her hut. 2. All her ornaments, whether taken off before actual death or after, were buried with her, and none were taken by any of her children. 3. In place of the ox or ram, a virgin ewe was slaughtered for the family and to provide a skin to cover the body in the grave. 4. No ox was slaughtered for the elders, since her own husband would supervise the rites and ceremonies. 5. Instead of a he-goat, a virgin ewe was slaughtered on the day after the burial, "to take away the smell from the homestead".

As far as the *hukũra* ceremonies were concerned, the husband of the deceased woman and the next senior wife and her eldest unmarried son performed the ceremony of drinking the milk and blood for the dead woman. The husband and all the sons of the deceased wore the bits of skin and performed the other rites and ceremonies. All the moveable property of the woman was taken to the hut of the next senior wife to be purified simply by being in the hut when the *hukũra* ceremonies were in progress and were not anointed with the fat of the sacrificial ram. The unmarried children of the deceased woman were also taken to the hut of the next senior co-wife for the ceremony of drinking the blood and milk mixture, and then the children were adopted (p.983) by that woman. The hut of the deceased was pulled down and its wood used as fuel by all the other co-wives, and there was no contagion of death attached to it.

After the *hukũra* ceremonies for a woman were over, and after a month more had elapsed and her husband had had ceremonial sexual intercourse with his next senior wife, the ceremony of taking the woman's spirit out onto the bush was performed (*gũtindĩka mũtumia*— to push the woman). For this the husband called on two senior council elders and their wives, and together with him and the wife who had performed the milk and blood ceremony, they went off in procession. A virgin ewe was taken instead of a ram, but in all other details the ceremony was the same as that for the spirit of an elder.

A Senior Married Woman, if an Only Wife

If a woman who was the only wife of an elder died, she was either buried, or her body was carried out to the *kĩbĩrĩra* by her grown sons (if she had any), or by some of her husband's nephews. The ceremonies were the same as those described above.

As the man had no other wife, he could not *hukũra* for the deceased in the ordinary way. He therefore waited until he heard of *hukũra* ceremonies that were about to take place for some elder belonging to the Ũkabi initiation guild. He went there and made arrangements to be allowed to drink the milk and blood mixture and otherwise participate in the *hukũra* ceremonies in the hut of one of the junior widows of that deceased elder. This having been arranged, he took all the unmarried children of the deceased to that woman's hut and slaughtered a small ram in order to

"cause them to enter her hut", and make them as her children temporarily. When the *hukũra* ceremonies took place, he wore a bit of skin for his deceased wife and not one for the deceased elder. He drank the milk and blood with the widow and her eldest unmarried son and with the eldest unmarried son of his deceased wife. When the *hukũra* ceremonies were over he left his children with that woman for a whole month, until he returned to that hut for the act of ceremonial sexual intercourse. Having done this, he took his children back to his men's hut, where they lived until he married again. The hut of his deceased wife was pulled down and used as fuel. Later on he called in two elders and their wives, and with them he went out into the bush to slaughter a young ewe for the spirit of his dead wife.

p.984

A Widow Living in the Care of a Married Son

If the widow of an elder had taken up residence in the homestead of one of her grown-up married sons, and if she died while living in that homestead, her body was buried by her grandsons. If there were no grandsons old enough to perform this service, the body was buried by her own sons, even though married. Those who carried out the burial rites were individually purified by washing in *taatha*, having their heads shaved, and going through the ceremony of *gũtahĩkio* (ceremonial purification).

Later on, before resuming normal relations with any of his wives, the married son in whose homestead the widow had lived had to perform the *hukũra* ceremonies for her, including the drinking of milk and blood with his senior wife, and finally the ceremony of sexual intercourse twice with that wife. This done, the son slaughtered a small ewe out in the bush while accompanied by his senior wife, any other married sons of the widow and their senior wives, and two council elders and their wives.

A Young Married Woman whether or not she had Co-wives

When a young married woman died, her husband arranged to perform a *hukũra* ceremony for his dead wife at the home of some other family who were having a *hukũra* ceremony for an elder in the way already described. When this ceremony was over, he arranged to have a sacrifice for the spirit of the deceased, but in such a case, since the deceased was a young married woman and not a senior married woman, the ewe was not slaughtered out in the bush, nor was it called *mwatĩ wa gũtindĩka mũtumia* (the virgin ewe for pushing the woman), but was slaughtered in the courtyard of the homestead and called *mbũri ya ngoma* (the animal for the departed spirits). Although primarily sacrificed for the deceased woman, it was also for all the other spirits of the family.

The animal having been slaughtered and the meat cut up into the usual joints, a small piece of meat was cut from every joint, the pieces cut from the left side joints being laid in one pile, and those from the right side joints in another. Joints of which there was only one, such as the head, the breast, etc. had two pieces cut from them and a piece put on each of the piles. The skin was not cut in half as it would have been at the ceremony in the bush, and it was not for the spirits. Nor (p.985) was any offering made of various kinds of agricultural produce as was the case for a sacrifice in the bush.

After all the joints had had pieces of meat cut from them, they were roasted and eaten by all the family, care being taken not to break any bone. All bones were then carefully piled in the middle of the courtyard. On either side were laid the raw pieces of meat from the left and right sides, and beyond each pile of meat was placed one half of the wooden stakes used for the roasting platform.

In the evening, the husband of the deceased called upon his male ancestors and male deceased relatives first, and said to them, "You see I have killed an animal for my dead wife. This, the right hand pile of meat is for you menfolk; eat it, it is our offering. The other pile is for my wife, my female deceased relatives, and for the children. Come all of you and eat". The members of the family then all retired for the night, and by next morning the meat of the spirits had been taken away by small carnivores. The Kikuyu were well aware that it was these little animals that took away the visible pieces of meat, but this showed that the spirits had accepted the offering and had "consumed it". Presumably what they consumed was the "essence of it", but on this the Kikuyu were not very clear. Early next morning some specially brewed honey beer was poured out where the sacrifice had taken place, one hornful for the men, and one gourd cupful for the women.

Young, Unmarried Men and Women, and Initiated Boys and Girls

As we have already seen in dealing with the Kikuyu guild death ceremonies, all unmarried people who had been through the second birth ceremonies counted as *thaka*, and were treated in the same way irrespective of sex. This was equally true of the Ũkabi guild, who also classed all these deaths as *gĩkuũ gĩa thaka*. When such a person was seriously ill, he or she was usually carried out to a rough shelter in the *kĩbĩrĩra* area. Here the *thaka* was watched and tended until he or she died. All ornaments were taken off before death and laid beside the sick child. When dead, the body was not touched. There was no reason, therefore, for any purification of the individuals who carried such people out and who watched by them.

If death took place very suddenly, however, the body had to be wrapped up and carried out through a gap in the fence of the homestead. The individuals who did this then had to be purified by washing in *taatha*, by shaving, and by being *tahĩkio* (purified).

After one day, a small he-goat or virgin ewe, according to the sex of (p.986) the deceased, had to be slaughtered for the purpose of *kũnungũra mũciĩ* (to remove the smell from the homestead). Unlike the Kikuyu guild, members of the Ũkabi guild never performed the ceremony of *kũhukũra* for a *thaka*, even in modified form. Instead, the mother of the deceased had a small goat or sheep killed for a purification ccremony and if the deceased had died in the hut, that hut was purified at the same time. No other person was purified, and the ceremonies were then over. There was no slaughter of a ram or ewe for the spirits of the deceased in the Ũkabi guild ceremonies.

An Infant

If a child that had not been through the second birth ceremonies died (it will be remembered that in the Ũkabi guild the second birth ceremonies took place very early), the body was disposed of by the mother, who then had her head shaved and was purified by a ceremony of *gũtahĩkio*. Nothing else needed to be done, for the death of such an infant was not very serious and did not greatly affect anyone save the mother.

Abnormal Death of an Ūkabi Guild Member

Deaths by Violence

As in the case of the Kikuyu guild, all violent deaths of the type classified as *gĩkuũ gĩa itimũ* (death from a spear) were in a special category. People who died thus were never touched, their ornaments were never removed, and the body was simply taken by hyenas.

For any such death, the owner of the homestead where the deceased had lived had to sacrifice a he-goat or ewe, *ya kũnungũra mũciĩ* (for taking the smell away from the homestead). If the

deceased was a married man or married woman, the appropriate form of *hukũra* ceremony was performed in due course, according to the status and sex of the deceased.

Those who died a violent death who were unmarried (*thaka*), simply had an animal slaughtered on their behalf "to take away the smell from the homestead". The mother of the deceased, however, had to be purified by a *tahĩkia* ceremony, because the dead person was "of her womb", and, being unmarried, was still linked to her in a special way·

p.987
Death by Suicide

If a person who belonged to the Ũkabi guild committed suicide, the procedure as far as cutting down the body, etc. was exactly as in the Kikuyu guild. Then a he-goat or a ewe "to remove the smell from the homestead" was slaughtered and the person who had cut down the body was purified. The performance of normal *hukũra* ceremonies took place for a married person according to the status of the deceased, but there was no *hukũra* ceremony if the deceased was unmarried.

Deaths Due to Smallpox and Famine

As in the case of the Kikuyu guild, all rites and ceremonies were temporarily waived during an epidemic such as smallpox, or during a severe famine. When a normal state of affairs had again been established, the survivors carried out the rites and ceremonies suitable to the status of those who had died, as though their deaths had been normal.

Death of a Complete Stranger

As the Kikuyu rules of hospitality involved giving food and a place to sleep to any passing traveller who asked for such help, it sometimes happened that a complete stranger died in a homestead. If this happened, no one ever knew to what guild he had belonged.

The procedure was the same whether he died in a Kikuyu guild or an Ũkabi homestead. A leather carrying strap was fastened round an arm, and occasionally round the neck, and the body was dragged along the ground far away into the bush, and left to the hyenas. A small ram was killed for the people who thus dragged out the body so that a medicine-man could use the stomach contents to perform·a purification ceremony on them. Then a second ram was killed by the elders of the whole village, and with the stomach contents of the ram and some *mũtei* leaves, these elders swept the hut where the death had taken place, the courtyard of the homestead, and the line where the body had been dragged.

Later, the owner of the homestead had to gather all his family and his flocks and herds inside the courtyard, and walk round the lines of the homestead with a small, live he-goat. Then he brought it in and slaughtered it in the courtyard. He had called in a medicine-man, (p.988) who now filled the fourth chamber of the he-goat's stomach (*ngerima*) with magic powder. The meat was eaten by all those present, and then the bones, which had not been broken, were heaped in a pile in the centre of the courtyard, and a big fire built up over them into which was put the *ngerima* with the magic powders, and wood from the following trees and plants: *mũgumo*, *mũkũri*, *mũtare*, and *mũkũyũ*. All the family and all the flocks and herds had to be present round this bonfire (*icua*) in the courtyard, and they were thus purified from the uncleanness of the death.

If at any later date information became available as to the stranger's identity, a message was sent to his family, which by law, had to give the family in whose homestead the stranger had died, seven goats and sheep, and one extra ram for the purification ceremonies.

Summary of Kikuyu Beliefs concerning Death

From the detailed study that we have made of the rites and ceremonies of the Kikuyu in connection with death, a certain number of fundamental ideas emerge concerning life and death and life after death.

In the first place, we find that a sharp distinction was drawn—in both the Kikuyu and Ũkabi guild customs—between the deaths of people who were married and those of people who died before they were married. The notes on death connected with matrilineal and matrilocal marriages in which marriage payments were not transferred from one family to another, shows us that "marriage" for the purposes of this distinction had to be of a truly legal form in order to be of any significance. Moreover, the fact that a young married woman who had not yet had a child counted as a *thaka* and was grouped with the unmarried, shows us that the really important distinction between the two groups was the question of children.

All those who had had children, even if the children were all dead, were treated in a special way which included the performance of a full *hukũra* ceremony and the sacrifice of a special ram or ewe for the spirit of the deceased. The spirits of those who had not married or who had not yet borne children did not have a ram or ewe sacrificed to them. If a *hukũra* ceremony was performed for them, it was only a very modified and insignificant variation of the full rite.

From these facts we see why every Kikuyu was so anxious to have children; it meant, among other things, that the spirit achieved a status which it would not have had otherwise.

p.989
It also emerges from our study that as much importance was attached to the spirits of senior married women as to those of married men, and either was as capable as the other of doing good or evil to those who survived them. Therefore, each had to be contented by sacrifices and offerings.

A third fact which emerges is that especially among members of the Kikuyu guild (which had a far bigger following in South Kikuyu than the Ũkabi guild), it was believed that there was some very definite connection between sex acts and death. Even in the rites and ceremonies of the Ũkabi guild we find a reflection of this idea, though in a modified form. In the Kikuyu guild, for example, certain ceremonial sex acts punctuated the whole hukũra ceremony, whereas in the Ũkabi guild the only ceremonial sex acts were after the hukũra ceremony, and before absolutely normal life was resumed. In both guilds no person closely connected with a dead person might have normal sexual intercourse before the hukũra ceremonies were over, and the rule even applied to the cattle and stock of the deceased, if he was a married man. As women did not ordinarily own stock, this prohibition did not affect the stock of a homestead if a married woman died.

It is important to note that for married people who had children, or even classificatory children, death was marked by ceremonies which appear to be really a form of final rite de passage, marking the last and final stage of the life of the individual. The fact that this rite de passage, that is, the hukũra ceremonies, were either omitted or much modified in connection with the death of unmarried people suggests that their deaths were considered premature and had taken place before they were really qualified to move into the last stage of life. The very close similarity in both the Ũkabi and Kikuyu guild rites between the stages of the hukũra ceremony and the stages of initiation into adult status cannot fail to impress the reader.

I hope it is evident from our study that the much criticised custom of "throwing bodies to the hyenas" was in fact by no means as callous or casual a custom as many writers have made it appear.

Apart from the body of a complete stranger, which was dragged rather hastily out to the bush, the Kikuyu custom of taking dead bodies out to the kĩbĩrĩra was a carefully planned one. In every case the body had to be carefully wrapped up, with legs and hands in the sleeping position, and placed in the kĩbĩrĩra facing the homestead. The fact that the body was allowed to be eaten by hyenas instead of being buried was not at all upsetting to the Kikuyu, who considered the European practice of incinerating as an alternative to burial, an utterly revolting and horrible idea. It is all a question of one's point of view.

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It is true that the bodies of those who died by violence were left where they fell and not touched at all. This was simply because the Kikuyu believed that to touch such a body in any way would have terrible consequences both for the person who touched the body and for the spirit of the deceased.

The belief of the Kikuyu in a life after death is fully borne out by all their death rites and ceremonies, but the life after death was a purely spiritual one. If a Kikuyu was asked the question, "*Mũndũ aakua, nĩathiaga gũtũũra kũngĩ?*" (When a person, a *mũndũ*, dies, does he go and dwell in some other place?), the answer was, "No". Because of this, many enquirers said that the Kikuyu denied an afterlife, thus contradicting their practices. The explanation is, of course, that the question was asked incorrectly. A *mũndũ* is a human being of bones, flesh, and blood. When a person died the *mũndũ* either rotted in a grave or was eaten by hyenas, therefore he ceased to exist and could not "go and dwell elsewhere". The *ngoma* (spirit), however, was a thing quite apart, and if asked the question, "What happens to the *ngoma* of a person when that person dies?" the Kikuyu answered, "*Ngoma ithiaga kũrĩ arĩa me thĩ*". (The spirit goes to join those who are in the ground). The Kikuyu land of spirits was not in heaven, but in the bowels of the earth. If you asked a Kikuyu where a man's spirit was while he was alive, his answer was, "*Kĩruru gĩake nĩ ngoma*". (His shadow is his spirit). Incidental to this idea is the Kikuyu belief that no dead body could cast a shadow, a fact which all solemnly affirmed!

The spirits were believed to be capable of eating, but they did so through the medium of small carnivores (*ciihũ*). No *kaihũ* (singular and diminutive of *ciihũ*) was ever killed, for, "*Ciihũ nĩcio atũmwo a ngoma*". (The small carnivores are the messengers of the dead). They were sent to fetch the offerings made to the dead.

The Kikuyu did not believe that a deceased person used the ornaments that were put in his or her grave or by the body in the *kĩbĩrĩra*, and the only reason for putting them there was to get rid of them because they had the "contagion of death". If the Kikuyu were asked why all ornaments had to be removed from a dead person who died in a normal way, the answer was always that when he was born he had no ornaments, when he went through the second birth ceremony he had no ornaments, when he was actually operated upon at initiation he had no ornaments, and at death, therefore, when he went to become a spirit, he had none. Here again we find the conception of death as a *rite de passage*.

If, in following up this line of enquiry, one tried to find out why a person who died a violent death did not have his or her ornaments (p.991) removed, the answer was, "*Ũcio ti mũhomori*". (That person was not a *mũhomori*). *A mũhomori* was a person who had lived out his or her full span of life, and died leaving descendants behind. It is clear, therefore, that violent death was regarded as something quite apart from the normal course of events, because the person's spirit went to the spirit world before his time had come for this journey, and before a true *rite de passage* might take place.

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Chapter 23 – Law and Justice

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Introduction

Before the coming of British rule among the Kikuyu, the administration of justice, the making of new laws, and the maintenance of internal peace were all in the hands of elders who worked through the councils known as *ciama* (singular, *kĩama*). There was no such thing as a "chief" in the ordinary sense of that word, and supreme authority over a village or over a territorial unit was never vested in any one man. It is true that the various accounts of early journeys into South Kikuyu country, such as have been quoted at length in Chapter 3, contain many references to chiefs in such contexts as "the village chief", "the chief of that valley", "the local chief", "a chief who lived at some distance", but the use of the word "chief" by those early writers was in every case due to a complete misconception of the Kikuyu system of tribal organisation, and to preconceived ideas based upon the organisation of other tribes. The Kikuyu word "*mũthamaki*", when first used by von Hohnel (1894) in his book dealing with 1887, and written by him "*samaki*", was commonly translated into English as "chief", although it did not really mean "chief" at all, but "one who gives orders".

In Kikuyu social organisation there were many different kinds of *athamaki* (singular, *mũthamaki*), who headed various organised activities in the territorial units. Thus in every territorial unit there were men called "*athamaki a ita*", or "people who give orders in war", and equally in each area there were men called "*athamaki a kĩama*", or "men who give orders in the council of elders". It will be noted that I have said in each territory "there were men" and not "there was a man", and herein lies the key to all Kikuyu organisation. The Kikuyu did not believe in vesting power and authority in any one man; the policy was always to have a number of men vested jointly with the same authority, none of whom was junior or senior to his colleagues. Every military regiment, every military company, every village council of elders, and every territorial council, had not one

man, but a group of men, who were the recognised leaders (*athamaki*), and who acted as a committee and not as individuals. One might well say, in fact, that the Kikuyu organisation was a true example of the committee principle.

One must also bear in mind that the office of *mũthamaki*, whether in (p.994) connection with military organisation, or with the council of elders was bestowed only according to merit, and no man became a *mũthamaki* because of his social rank. Further, no man automatically inherited the position formerly held by his father. The most that he could do was to inherit the outstanding ability of his father, and, through this ability, rise to the position his father once held.

In the study of Kikuyu law and justice we shall first of all consider the various grades of council elders and the qualifications for these grades, and we shall then pass on to a study of the judicial system, after which we shall study general matters of legislation and execution of laws.

The Four Grades of Kĩama Elders

Every male Kikuyu, when he married, was qualified to become an elder of the first or junior grade, even though he was still a member of a military regiment and was an active warrior. Most men paid the fee which was required of them in order to become a *mũthuuri wa mbũri ĩmwe* (elder of one sheep) as soon as possible after marriage. The fee had to be paid to the local *kĩama* council elders of the village in which the man lived, and it consisted of one ram. In addition to the local council elders, one or two elders from neighbouring villages were always called in on the day that the fee was handed over so that they might be witnesses to the fact that the fee had been paid.

On the day appointed for the man to hand over his fee, the local elders and those specially invited from other villages met together, the ram was handed over, taken out into the bush, and there slaughtered and eaten. The new candidate had the right to allocate the *rũcuthĩ* (sacrum with the lumbar and caudal vertebrae attached) and the skin, to two elders of his own choosing. These two parts of the animal were known as *maringa* (allotted portions), and the two elders who received them became the principal witnesses should anyone at some later date try to deny that the man had duly paid his fee to become an elder of the first or junior grade. The new candidate was shown exactly how to cut up and skin an animal which had been given to council elders, and taught how the various joints were to be apportioned. He himself was given the following joints from the animal to eat with any special friends among the junior elders: a *guoko* (foreleg), an *ikengeto* (half-saddle joint), the *gĩtũngo kĩa mara* (a portion of the intestines), part of the *ini* (liver), the *kĩĩga* (the first three ribs of each side with part of the sternum attached), and the *ngingo* (neck).

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When the meat had been eaten by all who were present, the man was formally told that he was now an elder of the first grade, and that he might in future attend any sitting of the local council as a listener and learner. That is to say, he had the right to sit on the outskirts of the circle of elders who were sitting in council, but he might take no part whatever in any of the deliberations or decisions.

The length of time which elapsed between becoming a first grade elder and a second grade elder varied greatly, and was dependent upon the ambitions of the man. If he had still been living the life of an active warrior he would have had neither the time nor the inclination to attend the sittings of the local councils at all frequently, and he would certainly not have had any incentive to pay the fee and become a second grade elder, which would have entitled him to take part in the deliberations. If, on the other hand, the man had postponed becoming a first grade elder until long

after he had married, he might wish to pay the second fee fairly soon after the first. Ordinarily, a man became a second grade elder a short time before passing out of the warrior class, that is to say, while a member of the senior regiment, for he knew that once the regiment he belonged to had been retired he would be expected to start to take a regular part in the council's activities.

There was, at any rate, no special rule, and in the course of time the man would decide that he wanted to become a *mũthuuri wa mbũri igĩrĩ* (elder of two sheep). He would then approach some of the senior council elders of the village and inform them that he wanted to pay the fee to become a second grade elder. The procedure was the same as that already described. The ram, having been handed over, was slaughtered in the bush and eaten by the council elders of the village, together with one or two from neighbouring villages, and the man was formally admitted to the second grade of elders.

He now belonged to the council and was entitled to speak at all council meetings of the elders; he was entitled to a share of all meat from animals paid by others as fees to the local council when they wished to become first or second grade elders. Moreover, he could now accept an *iringa* (an allotted portion), either the skin or the *rũcuthĩ* of the animal so killed, if the person who had paid the fee chose him as the recipient. Unless he happened to be a man of outstanding ability, he was, however, still only a learner, and would take little active part in any case that came before the council, or in any debate.

When a man had paid his fee to become a second grade elder he to follow it up by brewing beer and inviting those who had eaten the fee animal to come and drink beer at his home. He was then given full instructions as to the correct procedure in connection with beer (p.996) feasts (see Chapter 8), for, as a second grade elder, he would be connected with ceremonial beer drinks in many different ways.

Normally a man who was only a second grade elder was not allowed to take part in any of the *ndundu* (inner council deliberations). That is to say, he could not have any say in the secret deliberations of the leaders, at which they arrived at the final verdict of a case which they were trying. There were, however, exceptions to this rule, and a really outstanding second grade elder would be invited to be a party to the *ndundu* proceedings (see below) in order that he might acquire the knowledge necessary to becomc a *mũthamaki wa kĩama* (leader of the council). For as we have seen, a man was chosen as a leader only for his ability, and any person who showed himself to be particularly brilliant was given special opportunities denied to the lesser lights of the council.

No man could become an elder of the third grade until he had a child old enough to be initiated. He then had to pay a fee to the local council elders, and so become a third grade elder whether he liked it or not, for he could not have his child initiated until he had paid this fee. The fee for becoming a third grade elder or *mũthuuri wa mbũri ithatũ* (an elder of three sheep), was called *mbũri ya mwana*, and the ceremony at which this animal was slaughtered and eaten has been fully described in Chapter 16, in the section dealing with preparations for the initiation of a first child.

This condition attached to the third grade of elders, that a man had to have a child old enough to be initiated, acted as a kind of age bar preventing young, inexperienced men from taking part in the inner councils of the *kĩama*. On the other hand, in the course of time, almost every man had to become a third grade elder, and thus take a fuller share in the administration of justice in his own village.

At the same time, although every third grade elder was in theory entitled to take part in the *ndundu* deliberations, in actual fact only the most able ones were ever called upon to take an active part, unless their presence was needed to provide a sort of quorum.

On payment of his fee, a third grade elder was invested with a *mũthĩgi*, a special black staff which was a badge of office, and only elders who had this staff were ever allowed to take part in the very serious ceremony of administering an oath to two disputing parties who wished to undergo trial by ordeal. Moreover, until a man was a third grade elder he might never carry the bundle of leaves, either of *maturangũrũ* or *matathi*, which was a symbol of this senior position in the council of elders.

Once a man had become a third grade elder he could be a candidate (p.997) position of a *mũthamaki wa kĩama* (leader of the council of elders), but he could only achieve this status if he showed outstanding ability and had a particularly good memory, enabling him to quote Kikuyu case law effectively and accurately.

The fourth and highest grade of council elder was the *mũthuuri wa mbũri inya* (an elder of four sheep), and this grade was limited to a few people in each area. By becoming a fourth grade elder a man did not have any special judicial or administrative rights denied to the elders f the third grade, and in fact, the fourth grade elders held a position f religious rather than administrative or judicial authority. No man could become a fourth grade elder unless the other fourth grade elders of the district agreed to his election, and it was only as a fourth grade elder that a man could hold initiation ceremonies in his own homestead and act for other fourth grade elders as their adviser (*mũtonyi*) in the ceremonies. This whole matter has been fully discussed in Chapter 16.

From the point of view of law and justice, the most important position that a council elder could rise to was that of a leader of the council of elders, a *mũthamaki*. In every single village unit there was a council composed of elders of the first, second, and third grades, and perhaps a few fourth grade elders as well, and of this number, a small group of from two to five were chosen as leaders of the council. Unless at least one of them was present, a council meeting could not take place. No man could become a leader of the council of elders unless he was at least a third grade elder. While a few were fourth grade elders, it was not necessary to become a fourth grade elder to become a *mũthamaki wa kĩama*. What was necessary was that the man should have proved beyond dispute that he was an able speaker, a shrewd judge of whether a man was telling the truth, a good cross-examiner, and above all, a man who was fully conversant with all the laws of the land and the fines payable for breaking those laws. He also had to have an excellent knowledge of case law, and be able to quote from important cases of the past.

A man who had such qualifications was made a *mũthamaki* as soon as there was a vacancy through the death or retirement of one of the existing leaders. The choice lay with all the third grade elders of the council concerned. It was not a question of votes, but of unanimous acceptance. A man was nearly always singled out as a future leader long before he became a third grade elder, and as we have seen, a second grade elder who showed outstanding ability was taken into a *ndundu* or inner council, and trained with that end in view. Once a man had become a leader of his local council, his future depended entirely upon the degree of his ability.

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In all matters affecting a whole territorial unit, as distinct from a village, the local councils sent delegates to a territorial council, and it was the *athamaki* who were most outstanding within their own local council who were sent as delegates.

Similarly, in matters affecting several territorial units, or the country as a whole, each territory sent four delegates to a larger council, and a man who was very outstanding might find himself representing the whole of his territorial unit. His fame was then assured, and he would after that be in great demand in connection with appeal cases, as we shall see presently.

Judicial Procedure

One of the main functions of the local and the territorial councils was the administration of justice, and all third grade elders spent a lot of time hearing civil and criminal cases. The procedure in connection with both civil and criminal cases was essentially the same, but in civil cases the court had not only to come to a decision as to the facts of the case, but also to decide on the amount of compensation that had to be paid, if it was a case involving compensation. In criminal cases all that they had to decide were the facts, for the fines were fixed by law, and every council leader had to know exactly what the customary fines were for every type of criminal act.

Disputes and Cases

Two Members of the same Family

Any disputes arising between members of a single family were settled by the elders of that family, and the case was never taken to the village *kĩama* council to be discussed by people not related to the disputants.

Even in cases of murder or manslaughter within a family, for example of a brother, father, uncle, cousin, or any other patrilineal blood relation, the case would be discussed and settled by the elders of the family, and would never be taken to court. Moreover, one member of a family never had to pay compensation for a wrong committed against a member of his own family, even in the case of murder, "For how can a family fine itself, or pay compensation to itself"? All that (p.999) would happen in a murder or manslaughter case within a family was that the person causing the death had to supply five stall-fed rams to be eaten by all members of the family together

Members of the same Village

If any man or woman considered that some other person who was a member of the same village had wronged him or her, whether the wrong was criminal or civil, it was his or her duty to open proceedings against that person. (A woman could take proceedings herself only if she was a widow, otherwise she had to get her husband or her father to act for her). First of all, sugar-cane beer had to be prepared, and when it was ready the plaintiff sent messages to one or two of the local council leaders, and also to a few third grade elders who were not athamaki, inviting them to come and drink beer. When they came, the plaintiff proceeded to state the case against the other party, and named the defendant, giving a brief outline of the claim and the grievance. The council elders present, then drank the beer that had been provided for them—it was never very much, for it was not a beer feast, but beer brewed for this special purpose—and then they appointed two of their number to interview the defendant. They said to the defendant, "So-and-so has brewed beer for members of the council and has stated a case against you", and they gave him a brief outline of the alleged facts. The defendant either denied the claim entirely, or admitted to it, but in either case he was asked to fix a day when he would be prepared to come and meet the plaintiff in the presence of the council so that the case might be heard and a decision given by the council.

The defendant fixed a day, and the two elders departed to inform the plaintiff and the other council elders in the village of the appointment. Not all the elders would be free to take part in the council on that day, as some would have other important engagements, but it was the duty of all who were

free, to attend and see that justice was done. In particular, at least one of the local *athamaki* had to be present, and if when the day came no *mũthamaki wa kĩama* put in an appearance the case had to be adjourned.

When the plaintiff originally stated the outline of his claim, the elders present noted whether it was a claim involving a little or a lot of property, or in the event of a criminal case, whether it involved a large or a small fine, and they told both the plaintiff and the defendant what fees they were to bring with them when they came with their witnesses to have the case tried.

p.1000
If the amount of property or fine involved was valued at less than five goats and sheep, no fee was payable at the time, but both parties had to brew beer for the council elders at a later date in lieu of a fee. There were certain exceptions to this rule in connection with some criminal offences, as we shall see later in the detailed statement of the fines payable.

If the property or fine involved was more than the value of five goats and sheep but less than 20, both plaintiff and defendant each had to bring one ram or one he-goat.

If the fine or the amount of property involved was large, more than the value of 20 goats and sheep, then both parties to the case had to bring two rams or he-goats each as a fee to the court, and in some criminal cases, the fees payable were much greater still, as for example, in connection with murder and manslaughter. The basic principle, however, was that both parties had to pay the same fee to the council, with rare exceptions.

On the day appointed, the plaintiff and defendant each came with their witnesses and their fees to the village *kĩhaaro* where the case was to be held. The *kĩhaaro* was an open piece of grassland set aside in every village as a place of assembly, and its name was derived from the verb *kũ-haara* (to cross-examine). It was, in fact, the "place of cross-examining". When not required for council meetings, the *kĩhaaro* of each village was the dancing ground of the young people.

The elders met together on the *kĩhaaro* on the appointed day, the council leaders and the other third grade elders forming an inner circle with the second grade elders and the first grade elders in outer circles.

The plaintiff and defendant sat in the middle, and the witnesses of both sides were sent a long way away and told to wait until they were called; they were not on any account allowed to listen to the proceedings.

The plaintiff was handed a number of short wands of *mũkeũ*, *mũthakwa*, or *mũcatha* wood especially cut for the purpose by the council elders, and was told to state his case against the defendant, laying one of the wands on the ground when he wished to stress any particular point. If the plaintiff was a man, he then stood up (a woman had to speak sitting down), and addressed himself to the defendant, but loud enough for all to hear. When he had finished, he sat down, and the defendant was handed wands and told to give his answer to the charges laid against him, paying particular attention to each of the points stressed by the plaintiff with one of the wands. When he too had finished, the various third and second grade elders present were (p.1001) entitled to cross-examine either party on any points that seemed obscure; the council leaders for the time being said nothing, but simply listened attentively. If two elders stood up at once to cross-examine, a *mũthamaki* would signal to one of them to sit down until the other had finished.

If a council leader thought that any point had not been sufficiently cleared up in the cross-examination of the plaintiff or defendant, he himself took up the cross-examining, after which he,

and such of the third grade elders as he wished to join him, and one or two second grade elders called in by special invitation, retired away from the main circle and held a *ndundu* (secret deliberation).

Neither plaintiff nor defendant could attend the secret deliberations, but the witnesses were each in turn called before the inner council and cross-examined. The method of cross-examining them was for an elder to get up and say, "So-and-so (the plaintiff or defendant) has said such-and-such in the course of his speech and his cross-examination, what do you know to be the truth as regards these statements"? The elder conducting the cross-examination would deliberately mix fact and fiction in stating what the plaintiff or defendant had said. This was done in order to ascertain the truth from the witnesses. If the witnesses had fabricated a tall story in collusion with the man for whom they were testifying, they would not know whether or not the man had changed his facts when being cross-examined, and they would very likely lie by supporting some statement alleged to have been made by him, but which in fact he had not made at all. If the witness was a reliable witness, he would simply state the facts as he knew them, without attempting to support or to deny the statements alleged to have been made by the plaintiff or defendant.

When one witness had been thus cross-examined by several of the elders in the inner council, a leader of the council also cross-examined him if he thought any point had not been sufficiently cleared up. Then the witness was dismissed and another called in, and so on. While the sccret deliberations were in progress, the animals brought as court fees were being slaughtered, and the meat roasted by those participating in the inner council. Then, when all witnesses had been cross-examined, the members of the inner council held a deliberation on their own as to the verdict, first of all as to the facts, and then as to the amount of fine or compensation to be fixed.

Each member of the inner council was then sworn to secrecy, and they returned to the main circle and everyone present who was a council elder of the second, third, or fourth grade ate some of the fee meat. Then the council leader announced to the larger group the finding (p.1002) of the inner council. If the defendant lost, he was informed that four elders would come to receive the fine or the payment on a given day and the plaintiff was told that four elders would bring what was due to him on a given day. If the plaintiff lost, the case was dropped, or went to appeal.

The plaintiff and defendant could then address the court, and if either of them wished to appeal against the decision they had to say so then and there, in which case whoever had lost the case would not be called upon to pay until the case had been retried. If a man against whom a judgement was given did not appeal, and if he did not pay on the day fixed for the elders to come and fetch the fine, then more than the actual amount of the fine would be taken by force, unless he did not possess enough stock to pay all of the fine at once, in which case he would be allowed to pay in instalments.

Members of Two Different Villages in the same Territorial Unit

If a person belonging to one village wished to take action against a man who lived in some other village in the same territorial area as himself, he had to brew beer as before, and to this beer drink he had to invite not only some of the elders of the *kĩama* council in his own village, but also at least two from the village of the man against whom he wished to make the case. He outlined his plaint to the elders who assembled, and after drinking the beer, the local elders appointed two of their own number to go with two from the defendant's village and tell him what the plaintiff had stated against him. Then they got the defendant to fix a time and a place for the case to be heard.

The two elders sent as a delegation from the village of the plaintiff returned and informed him of the time and place appointed, and they also informed the elders of their own village.

For the case to be heard, at least one leader of the council of elders from each of the two villages had to be present. When the members of the two village councils had assembled, they informed each other that they had come with only one intention, *gũthuura ũhoro* (to sort out the matter), and they pledged to each other not to be biased in any way towards the person from their own village, but to judge fairly. The proceedings then continued as in any ordinary case, and after plaintiff and defendant had been cross-examined by elders from both villages, a small number of elders from each of the two villages retired to a distance to hear the witnesses and cross-examine them. Then after the witnesses had been dismissed, the elders belonging to (p.1003) the council of the village of the plaintiff called upon the elders of the defendant's village to express their opinion in the case. They commented upon these opinions and discussed the matter further, and then the leaders of the respective councils summed up the comments and opinions and suggested a verdict.

After further discussion some modification was accepted unanimously. All members of the inner council were sworn to secrecy, and these elders returned to the circle. Meanwhile, the meat of the animals paid as fees had been roasted, and when it had been eaten a spokesman from the village of the man who had lost the case announced the verdict, after which an elder of the village of the man who had won the case briefly reviewed the evidence and stressed the main points in it that had led to the decision given by the court. The plaintiff and defendant were each given an opportunity to state whether or not they wished to appeal, and unless there was to be an appeal, the elders appointed two of their number from each of the two village councils to form a delegation to go on a given day and collect the fine or damages awarded, and take them to the person who had won the case.

Members of Villages who belonged to Different Territorial Units

If any person wished to take court proceedings against a person who was a resident of a village of a different territorial unit, he had to proceed as follows.

The plaintiff brewed some beer and sent messages to a number of council leaders in different villages within his own territorial unit. He also invited the council leaders of his own village and one or two other elders of the third grade. When all these people had come to the beer drink he informed them that he had a case which he wished to take to court against a man named so-and-so who lived in such-and-such a village in such-and-such a territorial unit. He proceeded to outline his plaint, after which they drank the beer and selected three or four of their number to go as a delegation and inform the defendant of the plaint against him.

The delegation started off next day, and went, not directly to the defendant, but to the home of one of the council leaders of the village in which the defendant lived. When they arrived they were asked what business had brought them there, and they replied first of all, "We have come on a visit". When pressed, they stated that they had come to inform a man who lived in that village of a plaint laid against him by a man of their territorial unit. They added that they wished (p.1004) this man to be sent for so that they might speak with him. The leader of the council then provided the delegation with a small goat and sheep for meat, and he sent for beer from a homestead where he knew it had been brewed, if he had none ready in his own home, "As he had important guests from another territory who had come on business". Beer had to be provided, since it would have been rude for this not to be done.

That evening a message was sent to the defendant asking him come next morning to meet some elders who had a message for him. When he arrived, he was told of the plaint and asked to fix a day for the trial. In this instance the place for the trial was not fixed by the defendant, but by the elders, who named a place as nearly as possible midway between the homes of the plaintiff and defendant.

The elders then started home, and on the way they called at the village which they had named as the place for the trial, and informed one of the local council leaders there that they wanted to hold a trial on the dancing field of that village on a given day, and they asked that some of the council elders of that village be present and take par in the proceedings. They then returned home and informed the plaintiff and the elders of their own territory of the date and place fixed for the trial.

On that day both parties and their witnesses, as well as some of the council leaders and other elders of each territorial unit, assembled, and were joined by a few of the leading elders of the neutral territory where the case was being tried. The plaintiff and defendant stated their respective cases and were cross-examined, after which an inner council was formed of some of the elders from the territory of the plaintiff, of the defendant, and of the neutral area, and the council leader of the last named area summed up the views expressed by the others and suggested a verdict, which was agreed upon after further discussion, and then they went back to eat the fee meat and announce the decision. An opportunity for an appeal was given, and if none was asked for, the man who had lost the case was told when he might expect a delegation of elders to fetch the fine.

Appeals

If, after a case had been tried and a decision given, either party to the suit decided to appeal, there was a stay of judgement and leave was given to appeal.

p.1005
To appeal was "*gũcokia cira riiko*" (to put the case back on to the hearth), and the appellant sent messages to a number of council leaders who belonged to territorial units other than his own and those of the respondent to the appeal, and asked them to come to his homestead on given day as he had, "*Cira ngwenda gũcokia riiko*" (A case which I want to put back on the hearth). He also invited one or two leading elders of his own territorial unit who took part in the first hearing of the case, and one or two of the elders from the area of the other party who took part in the first hearing. He then slaughtered a large he-goat for the assembled elders. This was called *ngukumio*, and it was a special fee that had to be paid in advance for an appeal case. It was sometimes called *thenge ya kũgukumia athamaki* (the he-goat to win a hearing from the council leaders). He also provided beer for these leaders, and they slept that night in his homestead. The he-goat had to be slaughtered and roasted out in the bush, and the roasted meat brought on big wicker trays to the leaders in the men's hut.

Next morning the council leaders who had assembled sent a message to the other party to the suit saying, "We have been *gukumio* by so- and-so who has an appeal case against you, and we are coming to see you tomorrow so that you may also pay us the *gukumia* fee". All of the council leaders then went over to the home of the other man and received beer and the meat of a he-goat from him. This done, they fixed a day and a place for the appeal case to suit themselves, and they told both the appellant and defendant of this decision. Either might ask for a change of date, but not of place. If they had an urgent and good reason why they could not attend on the day first selected, a change of date was made, for the Kikuyu never held a trial in the absence of either party to the suit, and considered that to be grossly unfair.

Both parties to the suit were warned to bring two animals each as fees to the appeal court, and also to bring small he-goats which would be used to administer the *muuma* oath should it be necessary.

On the appointed day, appellant and respondent each stated their case before the assembled council leaders and were cross-examined by them. The leaders then retired to hear witnesses, and among others, they called several of the elders who had taken part in the first trial, in order to check up and see if the appellant and respondent were now telling the same story that they had told to the lower court. Should they discover that either party had told them a different version from that which he gave in the first hearing of the case, they summoned him and asked him why he had changed his statement. Then the leaders considered their verdict, and after eating the fee meat, they announced their decision.

p.1006
There was no further court of appeal after such a decision by the leaders, but if either party was dissatisfied with the verdict he had the right to demand leave to take the *muuma* oath and make the other party to the suit, take it also. If neither party asked for the *muuma* oath, the decision given had to be accepted and obeyed, and failure to obey it would render the man who refused liable to have all his property confiscated.

The Ceremony of Kũnyua Muuma

If a man objected to the decision given by a court of appeal, he had only one means of contesting the decision, and that was by taking the *muuma* oath. By so doing he exposed himself to the risk of serious supernatural punishment, for if he should forswear himself in taking this oath he would surely suffer and possibly die very soon afterwards. However, he did not take the oath alone, for the party who had won the case had to take it at the same time, and if this man knew that the decision, given in his favour, was in fact unfair, and based upon false evidence supplied by himself, he was in a difficult position. If he did not consent to take the oath it would mean that he was afraid of the consequences, and the decision would have to be reversed, whereas if he did take it, knowing that he had made false claims and statements, he put himself in a grave situation involving serious risk to himself and his family. If, therefore, there had been a miscarriage of justice and the man who had lost the case insisted that the *muuma* oath be administered, it not infrequently happened that the man who had won the case admitted that he had made false claims and false statements, and asked for a retrial and new verdict (even though it be against him), rather than risk the consequences of taking the *muuma* oath when he knew that he was in the wrong.

Sometimes, however, both parties to a suit genuinely believed that they were right, and both were willing to take the oath. Each of the two disputants had to provide a small, immature he-goat (*karũhĩ*), and these were both slaughtered by the assembled elders, and the blood of each collected in a specially prepared vessel made from the stem of a banana tree. These vessels had to be prepared by very old elders who were not likely to have sexual intercourse for many days to come. These same elders were also responsible for the other preparations for the ceremony to be described. In addition to the blood, the breast and spleen of each animal were laid on one side. The meat of these two small he-goats was then eaten by the very senior elders present, (p.1007) while the other assembled elders, including the council leaders, ate the fee meat already paid them and the meat of two rams paid by each disputant as a fee for the administration of the *muuma* oath. These two rams were called *ndũrũme cia kũgũra matũ* (rams to buy the ears of the elders).

When the very senior elders had eaten their meat, they completed the preparations for administering the solemn oath. They took a fire-brand and lit a small fire in the middle of the

public foot path, using as fuel the following plants: *mũgaa*, *mũnyũrũrũ*, and *njegeni*, none of which were ordinarily used as fuel, since they were "bad" plants. As sticks to impale the two breast joints for roasting over this fire of "bad" wood, two "jibbets" of *mũgere* wood were cut, and this again was a bad wood when used for this purpose. The elders preparing for the ceremony then brought the atlas and seven ribs from each of the small he-goats they had eaten, and they also cut round holes in each of the spleens, large enough to push a finger through. They made 14 grass bracelets (*ngoka*) of the type used in the *hukũra* ceremonies in connection with death. These and the atlas of each he-goat were then slung as a necklace on a piece of *njegeni* creeper, a "bad" plant. All preparations being complete, the two disputants were called to sit facing each other on either side of the little fire, each sitting on the path. Over the head of each was slipped the necklace made of grass bracelets and the atlas, and on the shoulders of each were placed the seven ribs of the he-goat that he had brought. In front of him was placed the banana stem container with the congealed blood from his he-goat, and over the fire was a *mũgere* stock with his pieces of meat roasting.

Each man was told to slip the piece of spleen with the hole in it over his penis. All the elders and council leaders then gathered round, and four of them took special places, one pair standing behind each of the two disputants, who were now squatting. The elders once more asked each disputant whether he was quite certain that he wished to take the very solemn series of oaths, that he had made no false claims, no false statements in support of his claims, and that he stood by his claim as being fair, true, and honest. Sometimes at this stage one or other of the party took fright, and knowing he was really in the wrong (even if he had obtained a verdict in his favour), asked to be allowed to stand down so that the case might be retried and the verdict altered.

If however, both wished to continue with the oath-taking, the ceremony proceeded. The two elders behind each man had seven *mũthĩgi* staves of office collected from the assembled elders. They took the 14 staves in a bundle and solemnly encircled both men with (p.1008) them seven times. That is to say, they passed the bundle round counterclockwise as they sat on the ground on either side of the fire. The staves were then again divided into two bundles of seven each, and each of the two pairs of elders, each pair with one bundle of seven staves, took up their positions again behind the respective disputants. Then the two elders standing behind the man who had first requested that the *muuma* oath be administered took their bundle of staves, and holding them horizontally, passed them over the heads of the two squatting men and threw them to the ground on the far side at the feet of the other two elders. As they did so, they said, "*Ũrĩa ũngĩheenania kana aiye indo ciene arobacana ũguo*" (May whichever one of you lies or tries to steal the property of the other by false statements come to grief thus). Then all the elders sitting round said in chorus, "*Mũrorĩa marongo*" (May you eat the lies).

The two elders at whose feet the first bundle of staves had been thrown then passed their bundle seven times horizontally over the heads of both oath-takers and cast them at the feet of the first two officiating elders. They repeated at the same time the admonition, and all the assembled elders repeated the chorus. Then each pair of officiating elders picked up the seven staves that lay scattered at their feet, and making a bundle of them, repeated this performance and admonition a further six times each, making 14 times in all. Next, the man who had first asked for the *muuma* oath to be administered had to take the spleen off his penis and eat it, and as he did so he repeated several times, "If I have lied, may I be destroyed by this meat". Then the other man did the same.

Next, the man who had asked for the oath to be administered had to consume seven mouthfuls of the coagulated blood from the banana stem container, and after each he had to swear that he had spoken the truth. Then the other man did likewise. After this they each took seven mouthfuls of

the piece of breast that was roasting on the *mũgere* stick, and each swore with each mouthful that he had spoken the truth and was not trying to obtain the other man's property by false statements. Next the first man had to take each of the seven goat ribs off his neck one by one, passing each one as he did so over his head and then breaking it in two, saying, "*Okorũo nĩ'heenanĩtie ndĩrotuĩka ũguo*" (If I have lied, may I break thus). The other disputant did likewise.

The grass necklace was taken off the neck of each man and laid on the ground at his feet, and the two disputants were told solemnly by the senior elders present to go home, and they were given seven planting seasons each in which to prove the truth. If either of them died in that time, or if a wife or child, of either died, they would know (p.1009) that that man had been lying, and the case would be decided in favour of the other. If neither was lying, no one would suffer, an arbitration would take place, and the disputed property would be divided equally.

When the disputants had departed, the elders took the broken ribs, the atlas bones, and other remains, and buried them where they would never be found. Both men who had taken the oath had to abstain from sex acts until the seven planting seasons were over, unless they knew quite well that they were guiltless. One or other would, however, almost certainly die or have a wife or child die during that period, thus proving his guilt, and a medicine-man was called in to perform a purification ceremony on the survivors, lest the curse should continue to exert its evil influence. The elders never performed a ceremony of annulling the oath, as was the case in connection with some of the other forms of oath-taking.

The *muuma* oath could not affect anybody but the person who took it and his wives, and children, but the other forms of oath were much more serious and brought a curse on the whole family of the man who took the oath if he was perjuring himself. The other forms of oath-taking were therefore used only in very important cases involving land, murder, or manslaughter.

The Ceremony of Kũringa Gĩthathi

If one of the parties to a major dispute, such as between two *mbarĩ* (sub-clans or landowning families) over the exact position of the boundary between them, was not satisfied with the verdict of the appeal council, then the one family might demand that the oath of *kũringa gĩthathi* be taken on its behalf by its representative, and by the representative of the other family involved in the dispute. Similarly, if one family was claiming against another family that they were responsible for the murder or manslaughter of a member of their family, and if this was denied, the *gĩthathi* oath might be administered to a representative of each party.

The *gĩthathi* oath, in former days, was in fact never used in connection with disputes between individuals, but only in disputes between families, for it was an oath which, if taken falsely, affected not only the person who took it, but all those on whose behalf it was taken.

The *gĩthathi* which was used in this ceremony was one of two things; either a curious stone with seven symmetrical holes in it, or the atlas bone of an elephant. *Gĩthathi* stones were rare, and nobody quite knows (p.1010) where they came from. They were not made by the Kikuyu, but were found, and had probably, but not certainly, been fashioned in pre-historic times, though what their original function was it is impossible to say. It was owing to their rarity that the atlas bones of the elephant came to be used as an alternative, since according to the Kikuyu such bones also had seven holes in them—three on each side and one through the middle. Men who found either an elephant's atlas bone or a *gĩthathi* stone kept them hidden in dark caves, and when anyone wanted to take an oath on the *gĩthathi* they had to hire one from its owner.

When it had been decided that a ceremony of *kũringa gĩthathi* was to take place, the two men chosen to represent their families each had to take the hiring fee of a virgin ewe and fetch the *gĩthathi* from its owner. The owner took it from its hiding place, wrapped it carefully in banana bark, and handed it to the two men, who took it to the place where the ceremony was to be held. If it was a dispute over land, the ceremony was held on the disputed boundary; if it was a dispute about an alleged case of murder or manslaughter, it took place somewhere in the bush.

Both parties had to provide a big he-goat (which was always spoken of as *ndegwa*—an ox) and a fat ram. These were killed and eaten by the assembled council elders and leaders. The *gĩthathi* was set upon a pole of *mũthakwa wa aathi* cut in such a way that it had seven branches forming a platform on which to rest the stone or atlas bone. Round it were set three *mũnyũrũrũ* sticks and three *mũgere* sticks, making with the *mũthakwa wa aathi* pole, a total of seven.

Having completed these preparations, the first disputant was called to come and take the oath. He had to insert his right-hand first finger into each of the seven holes in turn, and as he did so he solemnly swore that he had spoken the truth and that he and his family were not lying so far as they knew. Then he was handed a wand of *mũnyũrũrũ* wood, and this he inserted into the seven holes one after the other, again taking seven oaths. After this, he was given a *mũgere* wand, and he repeated the performance.

If a murder or manslaughter accusation was involved, the oath was followed by a solemn curse, "If the family we are accusing is innocent, then may the unknown family which is guilty of the murder of our person die". Then the other party in the dispute took the oaths in like manner, and if it was a question of an accusation of murder or of manslaughter, he said, "If our family is in fact responsible for the death we are accused of, may we die, but if we are not guilty, may the family that is guilty and that has kept quiet in this matter and caused us to be accused all die".

p.1011
In land cases the oath concerned the position of the boundary, and representative of each family took the oath on the boundary as claimed by them, the oath-taking apparatus being moved and set again after the first man had taken the oath on the claimed by his family.

After the *gĩthathi* oath had been taken, the elders warned both families that they had seven planting seasons in which to clear themselves and that if unaccountable deaths took place in either family during that time it would prove that they had sworn falsely. The *gĩthathi* was then given back to its owner, who wrapped it up carefully and took it back to its hiding place.

During the whole of the first planting season, no member of either family might have sexual intercourse, nor might they cause their children to go through the second birth or initiation ceremonies. Moreover, during the first planting season all he-goats of both families had to be castrated and kept from serving the she-goats, and all rams and bulls had to be kept away from the females.

If the oath had been taken in connection with a boundary dispute, the land lying between the two alleged boundaries might not be cultivated till the matter had been settled by the effects of the oaths.

If deaths started to occur in one or other of the disputing families during the period of seven planting seasons, then they were at once adjudged to have perjured themselves, and had the case given against them. To prevent further deaths, a ceremony took place at once to annul the effects of the oath.

The annulling ceremony, called *kũhorohia gĩthathi*, took place as follows. The elders were summoned by the members of the family that had not been affected by the oath, and they went to the other family where deaths had been occurring, and said, "Are you now ready to admit that you were in the wrong, and are you willing to give way to the other party"? When the answer was given as yes, the elders said, "Well then, come on such-and-such a day with one ram or ewe, and the other party shall also come, and we will remove the effects of the curse so that no more people die". On the day appointed, some of the elders went to the fields of each family, dug up a few sweet potatoes, and came with them to the ceremony. A few senior elders were sent to get pot clay, which they brought to the place, moulded into a rough imitation of the *gĩthathi* stone or the atlas bone originally used, and baked roughly in a fire to harden it.

This imitation *gĩthathi* was then set up on a pole of *mũthakwa* (instead of *mũthakwa wa aathi*), with seven branches to it, and round it were set six sticks, three of *mũkeũ* (instead of *mũgere*), and three of (p.1012) *mũthakwa* (instead of *mũnyũrũrũ*). Then the sacrificial animals provided by both parties were killed and the *taatha* (undigested stomach contents) from each taken by two elders. Some of the meat of each animal was also set aside and the rest was eaten by all the assembled council elders.

Having eaten the "fee meat", the elders made the man who represented the party that took the false oath go through all the gestures that were originally used, but as he did so he was prevented from actually inserting his fingers, or the sticks, into the holes in the imitation *gĩthathi*, and he was not allowed to finish any of his sentences, but was interrupted half-way through each of them. As each oath and each act that went with the oath was interrupted, he was anointed with the *taatha* of the ram or ewe provided by the other party. When he had finished, the man representing the other side was similarly treated.

The potatoes from the fields of each party were well rubbed in the ram's *taatha*, after which they were roasted and rubbed with it again, and each man was given potatoes from the fields of the other family to eat. This was *kũrĩanĩra* (to eat together), and was a symbol that the feud between the parties was over. The bits of meat set aside from the two fee animals were also rubbed in stomach contents and roasted, after which they were eaten by the men, each eating a piece of meat from the other family's animal. The ceremony was then over, and after rubbing *taatha* on the sticks that had been used, the elders threw them away, and the clay *gĩthathi* was broken up and hidden in the bush.

The Ceremony of Kũringa Thenge ya Mbũri (*To take an Oath on a He-goat*)

The ceremony of taking an oath with the *gĩthathi* stone or the atlas bone of an elephant was sometimes spoken of as *kũringa thenge*, because the word "*thenge*", although used mainly to mean "he-goat", could be used in reference to any other object used in an oath-taking ceremony. However, there were also times when, instead of using a *gĩthathi* stone or an atlas bone, an actual live he-goat was used in a variation of the ceremony. This ceremony differed from that described for the *gĩthathi* only in minor details that were connected with the fact that a live animal was used instead of a stone.

The two parties each brought a he-goat and a ram as "meat fees" for the elders. The plaintiff brought the he-goat that was to be used in the actual ceremony of oath-taking, instead of its being a *gĩthathi* hired jointly by both parties. The animal had its hind legs tightly bound with *muoha-akuũ* bark, and the front legs with *mũriĩra* roots. Both (p.1013) front and hindlegs were drawn up under the body, and it was further tied with roots and bark of both the above mentioned plants.

A large number of stones had been collected by the elders. The two men representing the disputing families sat on either side of the bound animal and proceeded to stone it, making it bleat loudly each time it was struck with a stone, and as it bleated the man taking the swore that his side had spoken the truth and was not trying to get other people's property by false statements.

When both men had taken seven oaths and had stoned the poor beast seven times, it was killed by being struck on the head by both men, who said, "If I or my people are lying, may we die thus". Then the elders took the battered carcass and buried it deep in the ground at some place where they could find the bones again at a later date. Both parties had to observe the sexual and general taboos as in the case of the *gĩthathi* oath.

When one party had been proved to be lying because death took place in the family, the ceremony of annulling the oath was arranged. When the elders of both parties had assembled, the bones of the he-goat were dug up and laid on the ground between the two representatives of the two families. By the side of the bones was laid an imitation he-goat made of green banana bark, and with an end bud of a bunch of bananas to represent the head. This imitation he-goat was bound with *muoha-akuũ* and *mũriĩra* roots.

In place of stones the men were given short lengths of *mũthakwa* and *mũkeũ* branches, which were, however, called stones. Each man had to pretend to take the oaths he formerly took, and to strike the imitation he-goat with the imitation stones. As he did so he was interrupted, and the imitation stones were anointed with *taatha*.

When both men had done this, the elders untied the bonds of the imitation he-goat, rubbed them all over with *taatha* and also rubbed the real bones with it. Then they carried the imitation he-goat and the bones of the original he-goat to the foot of a *mũthakwa* or *mũkeũ* tree in the bush, where they were left.

Both parties had to eat sweet potatoes and meat as in the case of the *gĩthathi* oath annulment, and the ceremony was over.

Standard Fines and Punishments

For each of the following offences, which in Kikuyu law ranked as criminal, there were set fines which could not be modified or altered. (p.1014) In such cases, therefore, it was up to the council leaders to decide the facts of the case, but not to arbitrate the compensation. It should be noted also that some things that are classed as civil offences in English law were treated by the Kikuyu as criminal, since they were acts contrary to the law of the land. For instance, if a man caused an unmarried girl to conceive, he committed a criminal offence, for it was against the law, and he was therefore subject to a fixed fine that could not be altered or reduced by the court.

It was always the individual or family that had suffered by a crime that took action in court to claim compensation, as there was no such thing as a public prosecutor. If the party won the case, it was ordinarily to this individual or family that the court awarded the fine or compensation, but on the other hand, for certain types of offences the council took the fine themselves, and did not pay any of it as compensation. There were definite reasons for this as we shall see below.

Murder or Manslaughter of a Male

From the Kikuyu point of view, murder and manslaughter counted as one and the same thing, and whether death was caused accidentally or intentionally, the fine was the same.

If any male was killed by a member of another family, no matter what the deceased's age, even including a new-born child, the standard fine was 100 goats and sheep, to be paid to the family of the deceased by the family of the murderer or person who committed manslaughter, nine stall-fed rams to be paid by the family of the deceased to the council elders as a fee, and nine stall-fed rams to be paid by the family of the killer as a fee to the council.

Of the 100 goats and sheep paid to the family of the deceased, nine had to be sent to his mother's brother, and 10 each to the paternal uncles of the deceased. The remainder went to the father of the deceased and his wives and sons. Of the 18 fat rams paid to the council as a fee, one was given by them to the mother of the deceased, one to the father of the deceased, and two to the family of the deceased as a whole, these two together counting as one ox, and being called *ndegwa ya njiga-mĩguĩ* (the ox to put away the arrows). These four animals were slaughtered and eaten by the family of the deceased. The remaining 14 stall-fed rams were divided among the council elders, who ate a portion of them on the day of the settlement, and the remainder at some later date.

If, when a male was killed, some member of the deceased's family (p.1015) went off and in cold blood killed a member of the killer's family, no compensation was payable, as the two deaths offset each other. This was not, however, regarded as at all satisfactory, for the Kikuyu objected to the idea that one death be paid for by a second. In fact, they had a proverb, "*Hiti ndĩheagwo kerĩ*". (A hyena is not given (a free meal) twice).

Murder or Manslaughter of a Female

If a female, whether an adult or a child, was killed by any person of another family, the family of the person responsible for the death had to pay the family of the deceased 30 goats and sheep. If she was a married woman, these were paid to the family into which she was married, except that her own brother was given five animals.

Both families to the suit had to pay a fee of three stall-fed rams to the council elders. Of these six animals the elders killed and ate four, gave one to the mother of the deceased (or to one of her classificatory mothers if her mother was dead), and one, called *ya kĩrige* (for a meat roasting party), to the family as a whole to kill and eat.

If the deceased woman was pregnant, the compensation was 40 goats and sheep instead of 30, and the number of stall-fed rams paid as fees was increased to four from each family.

Ostracism of a Habitual Murderer

A man who was a habitual murderer was disowned by his family by means of a public ceremony of *gũikia mũndũ na kĩano* (to cast a man out with an arrow shaft). By this ceremony the family gave public notice that they would never again take any responsibility for him, that if he killed anybody they would not pay compensation to the family of the deceased, and that if he was killed by anyone they would claim no compensation for his death.

The head of the family to which the *mũtoi* (violent or murderous person) belonged would summon all the council elders living in the vicinity, as well as representatives from all the neighbouring territories, including members of the warrior classes, and when they had assemblcd together with all the members of his own family, he announced that he proposed to perform the ceremony of *gũikia mũndũ kĩano*. He produced an ox and a ram to be slaughtered for all the company to eat, and while this meat was being divided up and roasted, (p.1016) some of the senior elders prepared a special bow of *mũgere* wood struts with string made from *mũgere* bark, and they also made two wooden arrows of *mũnyũrũrũ* and *mũgere* wood. All the family assembled in a circle round the

head of the family, with all the council elders in a circle round them, and all the warriors in yet a third circle. The elder then stood up with the bow and arrow in his hand and announced that the family hereby disowned the man, saying that if anyone ever attempted to claim against anyone who killed him, may they all perish, that in no circumstances would they consider a claim made for someone killed by the person disowned, and finally, that as far as the family was concerned, the said man was now a "wild animal of the bush" (*nyamũ ya gĩthaka-inĩ*). With this he fitted one of the arrows to the bow and shot it over the heads of the circle, out into the bush beyond. He then made all the same statements a second time and shot away the second arrow. Then the bow was broken in two and the halves were hurled away. From then on the man was a hunted outcast who would be killed on sight by anyone who recognised him.

The Law of Refuge for a Murderer or a Person who had Committed Manslaughter

Although by Kikuyu law it was not customary to kill a murderer or one who had committed manslaughter, but only to fine him and make him pay compensation, if members of one family actually saw a member of another kill one of their number, they would commonly "see red" and set about avenging the death by killing the assailant. In such a case, if the murderer or person who had committed manslaughter managed to escape the attackers, he could rush to a sacred tree, *mũgumo wa Ngai* or *mũkũyũ wa Ngai*, and once he was at the foot of the sacred tree he could not be touched or attacked, for this was sanctuary. The case would then come before the council and he would have to pay the customary compensation, but could not be attacked by the avengers.

Alternatively, a man who had killed a member of another family and who was being hunted down by them could run and hide, and then at night go to the hut of the parent or guardian of the person he had killed. This again counted as sanctuary, and having entered the hut of the parent or guardian of the person he had killed, he was safe from revenge, but would have to appear before the council and pay the fine and the compensation due.

A third sanctuary or place of refuge was the *kĩbĩrĩra*, or place set aside for the disposal of dead bodies. Even an inveterate thief or a (p.1017) habitual murderer (*mũtoi*) who had been proscribed and who could be legally killed by anyone who saw him, or who was being hunted by warrior police at the orders of the council elders, was safe if he could escape to either a sacred tree or a *kĩbĩrĩra*. He could not then be killed provided that he promised to leave the country at once. If he failed to leave the country and hung about instead, then he could be killed when he left the sanctuary, but if he agreed to leave for good, he would be escorted from his place of sanctuary to the borders of the territories where he was proscribed, and left to go where he liked. Such a man would usually go off to Central or North Kikuyu and become a serf there to a wealthy man.

Death of a Male owing to a Fall or to being stung by Bees

It sometimes happened that a male was killed indirectly by the property of another person or another family, but not due to any deliberate or even accidental act on the part of that person or family. Thus a man might be stung to death by bees from the hive of another person, or he might fall into a staked game pit dug by some other person. Deaths caused thus were never compensated for by the full amount which was due in cases of murder and manslaughter, but by half the amount. Thus the family of the person who owned the hive or the game pit had to pay 50 goats and sheep, and both parties had to give five stall-fed rams each as fees to the council. Of these fee animals the council gave one to the deceased's father, one to the deceased's mother, and one was called *thenge ya njiga mĩguĩ* (the he-goat to put away the arrows), although in fact it was a ram.

Death of a Female owing to a Fall or to being stung by Bees

As in the case of males, a female whose death was caused indirectly y the property of some other person or family was compensated for by only half the normal amount, namely, 15 goats and sheep, and each family paid two stall-fed rams as fees, of which one was given to the mother of the deceased and one to the family.

It must be noted here in connection with the fines payable for murder, manslaughter, and death due to indirect causes, that a death caused through the criminal act of the deceased was never compensated. Thus, a man killed while in the act of stealing, a person stung by bees belonging to a hive from which he was trying to take the (p.1018) honey unlawfully, or a person who fell into a staked pit forming part of the defences of a village entrance, was never compensated for at all for he was the cause of his own death through acting illegally.

Fine for Wounding a Person with a Spear or Arrow

If a person, male or female, was stabbed with a spear or shot with a metal arrow, the *kĩama* council was called in, and the person who caused the wound was made to pay one stall-fed ram to the wounded person to be used to make broth while he or she was recovering, and both the wounded person and the person who caused the wound paid a fee of one stall-fed ram each to the council at once.

Proceedings were then halted to see if the wounded person was going to recover or not. If he or she recovered, then the compensation paid for the wounding was 30 goats and sheep irrespective of sex. If the person died of the wounds, then the claim became one for murder or manslaughter with fees and compensation described above.

Fine for Wounding a Person with a Sword if no Bone was damaged

If a man wounded any person, male or female, with a sword or knife, and provided that he did not damage any bone of the person so wounded, no compensation was paid directly to the wounded individual. The council elders were called in, however, and they made the person who caused the wound pay one stall-fed ram and one he-goat to them as a fee, the meat of the he-goat going to the wounded person, except for certain minor joints retained by the elders.

From the ram killed by the elders as their fee, they cut two strips, one from the stomach and one from the skin, and put these on the wounded person's right middle finger if a male, or left middle finger if a female. This was a token that the affair was over. However, should the person subsequently die as the direct result of a sword wound, full compensation for manslaughter had to be paid.

Fine for Wounding a Person with a Sword if a Bone was damaged

If a person struck another of either sex with a sword and damaged a bone but did not actually break it, he had to pay 10 sheep and goats (p.1019) for each splinter of bone that was severed from the parent bone. Thus, a sword cut on the skull that caused three bits of skull to come away meant a fine of 30 goats and sheep, and the *kĩama* council got fees of thre stall-fed rams from both the victim and the aggressor.

If the bone of a limb was actually cut through by a sword cut, it counted as a broken bone and the compensation depended upon the limb so broken.

Fine for Breaking Someone's Leg

Any person who broke another's leg, either intentionally or accidentally, had to pay 50 goats and sheep as compensation, and both parties had to pay court fees of five stall-fed rams each.

Fine for Breaking Someone's Arm

If any person broke the arm of any other person, intentionally or accidentally, the *kĩama* council was called in and the fine was 30 goats and sheep for the wounded person as compensation, and both parties had to pay the elders three stall-fed rams each as fee.

Fine for Severing One or Two Joints of a Finger or Thumb

If a person cut or bit off one or two joints of a person's finger or thumb, the case went before the elders as usual. The person who severed the finger joint had to pay one stall-fed ram as a fee to the council, called *ndũrũme ya ngwaro* (the ram for rawhide strips). The elders ate this beast, but from its skin and stomach they made rawhide strips for the wounded person. The latter had to pay the council one ram as a fee, this being called *ndũrũme ya kũiga kĩara* (the fee to put away the finger joint). The person who did the damage had to pay the standard compensation of 10 goats and sheep, and also had to give to the wounded person a barrel of honey and a he-goat. When the compensation animals were brought to the wounded person by a delegation of council elders, he had to give them one more ram or ewe called *ya mwarĩra taatha* (for spreading the stomach contents). This animal was slaughtered by the elders, who sprinkled its stomach contents on the ground by the entrance to the homestead, so that the 10 compensation animals (p.1020) stepped in it as they first entered their new home.

Fine for Severing the Whole Finger, that is, Three Joints

If any person cut off or otherwise severed the whole of someone's finger, he had to pay 20 goats and sheep as compensation and two stall-fed rams as a fee to the elders. The person whose finger had been cut off also paid the elders one stall-fed ram as a fee for settling the case, and later one ram or ewe when the compensation was brought to him.

Fine for Cutting Off the Whole Hand or Arm below the Elbow

If any person cut off the whole of another's hand, or his lower arm, he had to pay 50 goats and sheep as compensation, and three stall-fed rams as a fee to the *kĩama* council. Of these, one was given to the wounded person for broth and meat. The wounded person handed the council two animals, one for a fee and the other to be killed when the compensation animals were brought to him.

Fine for Severing a Foot or Leg

This fine was the same as for severing an arm or hand, whatever the sex of the wounded person might be. We thus have the anomaly that if a woman was killed the compensation was only 30 goats and sheep, whereas if she lost an arm or a leg, 50 goats and sheep had to be paid in compensation.

Fine for Destroying One Eye

In the event of a person putting out someone else's eye and making him or her blind, or practically blind, in that eye, the fine was 30 goats and sheep as compensation. The wounded person had to pay two stall-fed rams to the council, one as a fee, and one when the compensation was brought to him. The person who caused the damage had to pay one stall-fed ram as a fee, and one he-goat, which was given to the wounded person for meat and broth.

p.1021

Fine for Causing Blindness in Both Eyes

If any person caused another to lose the sight of both eyes (a very rare occurrence), he had to pay as compensation not 60, but 80 goats and sheep, and eight stall-fed rams, to the council, of which they gave one to the blinded person for broth and meat. The blinded person had to pay a fee of one ram to the council elders, and one more when the compensation animals were brought to him.

The reason why the fine was not doubled, but nearly trebled for causing the loss of two eyes, was said to be because, "A blind person is practically a dead person, he can no longer walk about, work, fight, or see people and things".

Fine for Cutting Off a Person's Ear

If a person cut off another's ear, the fine was only one virgin ewe, and the person who cut the ear off paid the council a fee of one stall-fed ram, but the person whose ear had been cut off did not pay a fee. This is one of the very few cases where fees were not paid by both parties to a suit.

Fine for Knocking Out One or More Teeth

If any person knocked out the teeth of another, the person whose teeth had been knocked out did not have to pay any fee to the *kĩama* council but the person who had knocked them out had to pay a fee of one fat ram, and compensation of five goats and sheep for each tooth.

Fine for Causing Permanent Damage to a Male's Penis

If by means of spear, sword, arrow, or any other means, a person wounded and caused permanent injury and disablement to the penis of any male, young or old, the fine was 50 goats and sheep, and the wounded person paid no fee to the council except one ram when the compensation animals were brought to him. The man causing the damage had to pay a fee of three animals, two of which would be eaten by the council elders (from one of these they cut two rawhide p.1022 strips to put on the patient), and one to be given to the wounded person for broth and meat.

Fine for Damaging the Scrotum of a Male

If a man or woman caused permanent damage or disability to the scrotum of any male, causing him thereby to become infertile, the fine was 30 goats and sheep, and the person causing the damage paid a fee of one ram and one he-goat to the council elders. The former they ate, but used a part of the skin and stomach for two rawhide strips, which they gave to the wounded person, who had to pay one ram when the compensation animals were brought to him, but no other fee.

Fine for Killing a Goat or Sheep belonging to Someone Else

If any grown man killed a sheep or goat belonging to any other person, the man who owned it paid a fee of one ram to the council that investigated the matter, and the man who had killed the animal paid a similar fee. The fine payable was 10 goats and sheep, and when these had been collected they were taken by the council to the man whose goat or sheep had been killed, and he had to slaughter one more ram for the elders in order that the animals might enter his homestead over stomach contents.

If a woman, girl, or uninitiated male killed a goat or sheep belonging to someone else, the fees were the same but the compensation was only one goat or sheep of the same approximate age and sex as the one killed. The reason for this curious discrepancy was said to be that women, girls, and

uninitiated boys did not appreciate the value of stock in the same way as adult males did, and therefore if they killed one of someone else's it was not such a serious matter as if a man did so.

Fine for Killing a Heifer, Cow, Bull, or Ox belonging to Someone Else

No matter what the sex or age of someone responsible for killing another person's cow, compensation consisted of handing over an equivalent animal, and the person responsible, or whoever was responsible for him or her (if a woman or child), had to pay a fee of a stall-fed ram to the council elders. The owner of the dead animal did not have to pay any fee.

p.1023
Causing Deliberate Damage to Crops

Sometimes a man who was very angry with another would go out in a rage and cut down the other's crops. This was a very serious offence, and both parties had to pay a fee of one ram each to the council elders, who then, after hearing the case, went out and assessed the value of the crops cut down. The man who cut them down had to pay this assessed value, plus several extra goats and sheep as an additional fine. When the stock payable as compensation was taken by the elders to the home of the man to whom they were to be handed over, he had to produce a ram, which was slaughtered by the elders to provide undigested stomach contents for the stock to trample over as they came in to his homestead.

Fine for Stealing a Goat or a Sheep

If any person stole a goat or a sheep, either from a homestead or while it was grazing, or found a stray goat or sheep and made no attempt to trace its owner, and the owner found out, he reported the matter to the council elders. They summoned the thief, who had to pay a fee of one stall-fed ram to them as well as returning the stolen animal to the owner.

If a stolen goat or sheep was not recovered alive because the thief had killed and eaten it, and if he had been traced and found in the act of eating it, the case went before the council, and both parties had to pay a fee of one ram each to the council elders. The thief also had to pay a fine of 10 goats and sheep because he had killed someone else's beast. Moreover, should he have been found eating the stolen beast with several other men, every person partaking of the stolen meat, even if they did not know it was stolen, had to pay a fine of one stall-fed ram to the council elders.

Fine for Theft of Food from Fields or Granary

If any person stole food from the fields or granaries of another person and was found out, the person from whom the food was stolen reported the matter to the council elders, who made the thief pay them a fee of one stall-fed ram, and give the owner of the stolen food a goat and a sheep skin.

p.1024
Punishment of Thieves

If a man who had been convicted of theft stole again, his own family would be very angry, and probably threaten him with disinheritance which they might actually carry out if he became a habitual thief. Furthermore, if a man proved to be a habitual thief, the council elders could give orders for him to be killed, for the punishment for habitual theft was death.

If a thief heard that he was to be put to death, he usually took flight, but he was a marked man, and anybody who recognised him as a proscribed thief could kill him.

Fine for Rape of a Married Woman or an Initiated Girl

If a woman or unmarried initiated girl was raped, she reported the matter to her husband or her father, and then he reported the matter to the *kĩama* council. He paid no fee to the council, but the offender had to pay three stall-fed rams to the council, one as a fee and two as a fine. The fine did not go to the husband or guardian of the woman or girl, because, as the elders pointed out, if it did a man might be tempted to arrange for his wife or daughter to state that she had been raped in order to obtain the value of the fine, and in matters such as rape, it would be easy to make a false charge against a man for the sake of gain, since there would be no witnesses. By making the fine payable to the council and not to the husband, guardian, or even the woman herself, they imposed a safeguard against false charges. Besides the fee and the fine, the offender had to provide a small ram or ewe, which was given by the council elders to a medicine-man, that he might cleanse the woman with a ceremony of *gũtahĩkia*.

Fine for Assaulting a Woman in her Own Hut

f any man should enter the hut of a woman uninvited and attempt to have sexual intercourse with her, not necessarily by force, but by using threats to make her give way to him against her will, she reported the matter to her husband or guardian, who reported it to the *kĩama* council. The offender was summoned by the council and had to pay a fee of a stall-fed ram to the council and a fine of two stall-fed rams, which the council retained and did not give to the (p.1025) husband or guardian, for the same reason as in the case of the rape of a married woman (see above). Then, in addition, he had to pay a virgin ewe for the ceremony of purifying the woman. The aggrieved party did not have to pay any fee.

Fine for Assaulting an Uninitiated Girl or an Initiated Girl who had not Menstruated

If any man committed or attempted to commit a sexual assault upon an uninitiated girl, or upon a girl who, though initiated, had not yet reached puberty, the father or guardian of the girl reported the facts at once to the *kĩama* council. They tried the case without demanding any fee from the guardian of the girl, but they demanded a fee of one stall-fed ram from the defendant, and if he was proved guilty he had to pay a further fine of two stall-fed rams to the *kĩama* council. He also had to pay the father or guardian of the girl a virgin ewe for a ceremony of purification for the girl, and a further five ewes or she-goats to the father or guardian, not as compensation, but to perform the various purification rites and ceremonies that would be necessitated at intervals in the girl's life—as for example at initiation, at her first menses, at marriage, and at the birth of her first baby—because of the fact that she had been sexually assaulted while still immature. It was felt that the man who had made the girl unclean in this way and had involved her in all these purifications had to pay the cost of them.

Fine for Adultery

If a man made love to a married woman without the knowledge and consent of her husband, and became her secret lover, and if the husband ultimately found out and caught his wife with the man, he at once summoned a number of neighbouring elders—no matter what time of the night it was—and they took charge of the culprit that night as a prisoner. Next day the man was prosecuted before the *kĩama* council. The adulterer was fined three stall-fed rams, which he had to pay to the council elders. None of them were given to the husband, for he might make no profit from his wife's unfaithfulness. The offender was to produce a small ram or he-goat, and he took a *muuma* oath that he would never again visit that woman, and that he would never again commit adultery with

any other woman. This *muuma* oath was (p.1026) administered exactly as described earlier, except that it was taken by only one man, and not by two disputants.

The woman with whom he committed adultery was beaten by her husband and he rubbed sheeps' urine into her bruised skin, which made it smart terribly. Alternatively, the husband shook a nest of tree ants over her so that they bit her. In addition, the woman's father or guardian was summoned and had to pay the husband one fat ram because his daughter or ward had proved to be a "bad woman" Adultery was not, however, a cause for divorce, unless the woman persisted in it in spite of punishment.

Adultery was regarded as a very, serious crime, for, as the Kikuyu pointed out, both men and women had ample opportunity for sex acts within the law, and this was even true of married women, as we have seen. Therefore, there was no excuse whatever for a man or a married woman to have sexual lovers in this way.

Fine for Adultery followed by Death of the Woman in Childbirth

If a woman conceived as a result of an act of adultery, and later died in childbirth while bearing that lover's child, the lover was responsible for her death, and the husband sued him for manslaughter.

Fine for Causing an Unmarried, Initiated Girl to Conceive

As we have seen in Chapter 19, an unmarried girl was allowed to have restricted sexual intercourse with her lovers, but she might not have full intercourse. In spite of this law, cases did occur where a girl allowed her lover to have full intercourse and then conceived by him. In such a case, as soon as the mother of the girl discovered that her daughter had conceived, she informed her husband, who told her to question the girl and find out who was the father of the child. The girl confessed and named a man, and her father sent two council elders to the father of the young man to inform him of the allegation. The young man's father then questioned his son, who might or might not admit paternity. If he did, it became a question of whether or not he wished to marry the girl. If this was his intention, the father told the elders to say that paternity was admitted and that the man wished to marry the girl. In this case, the father of the girl took the matter before the *kĩama* council, and the parents of both the girl and the young man appeared. The father of the young man had to hand the *kĩama* council (p.1027) a fee of one stall-fed ram *mbũri ya gũthegemia* (to take cognisance of the facts). Some of the fat of the ram was sent to the girl after it had been rubbed over with stomach contents, and the girl had to rub it on her body.

By taking the *mbũri ya gũthegemia*, the council of elders officially took note of the fact that the young man admitted paternity and wished to marry her. All further proceedings were stayed until the baby was born. Should the mother die in childbirth, the young man had to pay full compensation for her death and he could not deny his responsibility, as the council had noted that he admitted paternity.

If the young man admitted paternity but did not wish to marry the girl there were several possible courses of action. The young man might simply hand over a fat ram as a fee of *ya gũthegemia* so that the court took cognisance of the facts, and nothing more was done until the baby was born, when the man, unless he had changed his mind and now wanted to marry the girl, had to pay a fee of three more fat rams to the council (making four in all), and nine goats and sheep as a fine to the father or guardian of the girl. Should the baby be still-born, or there be a miscarriage, the young man had to pay one more stall-fed ram over and above the four paid in the ordinary course of

events. This was called *ya korerio* and was also a fee to the *kĩama* council. Should the girl die in childbirth when the man had admitted paternity but said he did not wish to marry her, he still had to pay the full fine for her death.

If the young man who admitted paternity, did not want to marry the girl, and could persuade the girl's father or guardian to accept straightaway the full fine for the fact that he had caused her to conceive, without waiting for the birth, he paid four stall-fed rams to the *kĩama* council and nine goats and sheep to the father or guardian of the girl. Of these four stall-fed rams paid as a fee to the *kĩama* council, one was taken by three elders from the village of the young man together with three elders from the village of the girl, and the young man's father, who provided beer in a big *nyanja* gourd and a *gĩtete* bottle gourd. This ram was slaughtered at the foot of a *mũthakwa* tree in the bush near the home of the girl, and was in the nature of a sacrifice to pray for the girl that she might be fruitful in her future life and that her children might not be still-born. Some of the meat of this animal was eaten by the elders and some was sent to the parents of the girl. The beer in the *gĩtete* bottle gourd was poured out as an offering to God at the foot of the *mũthakwa* tree, and that in the *nyanja* was drunk by the elders who performed the sacrifice. If after this the girl died in childbirth, the young man was not responsible for her death.

If payment of the fine and fees was postponed until after the child (p.1028) had been born, the above sacrifice was performed after the baby had arrived safely. The animal for the sacrifice was always one of the four stall-fed rams paid as a fee to the council elders.

If the young man denied the girl's allegation that he was the father of her child, the girl was brought before the council of elders and she there confronted the young man and stated before the court when and how he came to have full intercourse with her. Both the young man and the girl were cross-examined by the council to arrive at the truth If it was proved that the young man was lying, he had to pay the full fine and fee in due course after the baby was born, but he was not allowed to pay the fine before the baby was born, even if the father of the girl was willing. The elders said that he had tried to deny his responsibility, therefore he might have no chance to avoid further responsibility, and if the girl should die he would have to pay compensation.

If, when the young man was confronted with the girl, he strenuously denied paternity, and the elders were not satisfied as to whether he was lying or not, the girl was asked how many months had elapsed since he had intercourse with her. The elders tied knots in a piece of cord to represent the number of months more that must elapse before the baby was born if the girl was telling the truth. Should the baby be born before that number of months had passed, or should it still be unborn at that time, the girl was obviously wrong and was trying to shield some other man, who would then be found. Sometimes the man admitted having had full intercourse with the girl but denied that the baby was his and said, "If it is mine, it was so many months ago and the baby will therefore be born in such-and-such a number more months". Then the elders tied knots in a cord to represent his statement and that of the girl, and waited to see who was speaking the truth.

Occasionally a young man absolutely denied any connection with a girl and insisted that she was making an entirely false statement against him. In this case he was allowed to take a *muuma* oath, but he was unlikely to do so unless he was absolutely positive of his innocence.

Girls had little incentive to put the charge of paternity on an innocent person. Occasionally they did so, but if they did, they usually took care to see to it that he would not be in a position to take the *muuma* oath. Thus, if a girl had allowed some man whom she did not actually love to have full intercourse with her and destroy her virginity, and if she then feared the consequences, she would

allow some man whom she did like and wished to marry to have intercourse with her also, full or restricted. Then, if she conceived, she considered she could (p.1029) mention him as the father of the child with a fair hope that he would elect marry her rather than pay the fine, and he would not be able to take the *muuma* oath because he knew that there was just a chance that he was the father of the child, even though he considered it unlikely.

Fine for Beating someone Else's Wife

If a man, when drunk or in anger, struck or beat the wife of another man, the husband reported the matter to the council, and if it was proved, the man was was made to pay the council a fee of one stall-fed ram, the skin and stomach of which were cut into rawhide strips to put on the woman to cleanse her from the maltreatment.

Should she have been with child, and should the beating have caused a miscarriage of a young, unformed foetus, the man who beat her was fined four stall-fed rams, three of which were retained by the *kĩama* council and one of which was given to the husband of the woman to slaughter for him to make her the recognised tonics needed after a miscarriage (see Chapter 14).

On the other hand, if as the result of a beating, a woman miscarried a foetus that was almost formed, say in the seventh or eighth month of pregnancy, the man was considered to be guilty of manslaughter, and had to pay compensation according to the sex of the unborn child. He would not, however, pay full compensation, but 40 goats or sheep for a boy, together with three stall-fed rams as a fee to the *kĩama* council, one ram for a purification ceremony for the woman, one ram for a shaving ceremony for the woman, and one ram for tonics for the woman. The husband of the woman would pay no fee to the council other than one stall-fed ram when the compensation was brought to him by the elders. If the foetus so miscarried was female, the man who had beaten the woman had to pay 10 goats and sheep for the death of this unborn child, two stall-fed rams as a fee to the *kĩama* council, and three rams for the woman as noted above.

Fine for Homosexuality

If a man attempted to commit an unnatural act on a boy or another man the matter was reported to the council, and the culprit had to pay a fine of one stall-fed ram and a fee of two fat rams. They also demanded another ram, which they handed over to a medicine-man in order (p.1030) that he might perform a purification ceremony for the person assaulted. Sodomy was exceedingly rare, and was regarded as the act of a madman.

Fine for Bestiality

If while herding goats and sheep an uninitiated boy attempted to have sexual contact with a goat or a ewe, and the matter became known, the animal was immediately slaughtered, and the father of the boy had to pay one fat ram to the elders as a combined fine and fee.

If an initiated male attempted to have intercourse with a beast, and the matter was reported to the *kĩama* council, the animal was at once killed, and the culprit was made to pay a fee to the court of two stall-fed rams, and in addition to pay the owner of the animal compensation to the amount of 20 goats and sheep. The fact that an adult man had attempted such an unclean thing would cause the whole flock to become impure, and probably many animals would die and abort, hence the large amount of compensation to be paid. Such cases were very rare but not unknown. Moreover, the man's crime became publicly known as a result of the court case, and he would have to leave his own territory and go somewhere where he was unknown, for no woman or girl who knew about the offence would ever again let him come near her.

Fine for Arson

If a man deliberately or accidentally set fire to a hut or huts in someone else's homestead, the owner took the case before the council, paying a fee of one stall-fed ram. The fine was 30 goats and sheep for each hut burnt, with a maximum of 100 if four huts or more were destroyed. The man whose huts were burnt also had to pay the council one stall-fed ram called *ndũrũme ya kũhoria ihĩĩra* (a ram to put out the fire). This they slaughtered and ate, sprinkling the stomach contents over the hut ruins.

Fine for Deliberately Breaking a Cooking Pot in someone else's Hut

Sometimes in a fit of uncontrolled anger a man or woman deliberately broke a cooking pot in someone else's home, throwing it violently on (p.1031) on the ground or breaking it with a stick. This was a very serious offence and was tantamount to willing the death of the owner of the homestead and all his children. The owner at once reported the matter to the council of elders—without having to pay any fee—and they summoned the offender, who had to pay them one ram as a fee, and six other stall-fed rams for a variety of purification ceremonies. One ram was called *ndũrũme ya kũhorohia nyũngũ* (a ram to make the (broken) peaceful, that is, to take away its power to cause harm). This was killed and eaten only by those council elders who were so old that they had ceased to function sexually, and the stomach contents of the ram were rubbed all over the broken pot fragments in the presence of the man who broke the pot. One ram was for a *gũtahĩkia* ceremony. It was called *ndũrũme ya ndahĩkio* (a ram for purification), and was handed to a medicine-man, who performed a ceremony of purification on the inhabitants of all the huts in the home. The owner of the homestead was purified with his senior wife and her children outside her hut, and all the other wives were likewise purified with their children, each outside their respective huts. One ram,*ya kũnungũra mũciĩ* (for removing the smell from the homestead), was sacrificed in the middle of the courtyard as a family sacrifice, and the meat was eaten by all residents of the homestead. One ram, *ya gũthiũrũra mũciĩ* (for encircling the homestead), was to perform the ceremony of going round the homestead, all its inhabitants, and all its stock. This was done with the live ram, after which it was slaughtered and its stomach contents sprinkled all round. The council elders assisted the owner in this ceremony, and then shared the meat with him and his family. The bones were put on a fire in the middle of the courtyard with magic powder, and burnt completely to an ash. Another ram, *ya nyũngũ*, was "for the pot". This was killed by a medicine-man in the presence of the council elders, and its stomach contents were boiled in a pot (not a new one) in the middle of the courtyard, with a variety of herbs collected by the medicine-man. All members of the family had to wash in this water as a further purification. The meat of the animal was boiled in another pot in the hut of the senior wife and then eaten by the family and the council elders. The last ram, *ya gũthiĩ mũciĩ* (for going into the homestead), was a ram which the owner had to slaughter for a family sacrifice after the lapse of a full month. He put rawhide strips from its skin on all his wives, and after that and not before, he and his wives might resume normal life, including sex acts, which had been taboo from the moment the pot was broken.

p.1032

Fine for Deliberately Breaking any Gourd Vessel in someone else's Home

If a man, when angry or drunk, deliberately broke a gourd vessel in someone else's home, the matter was reported to the *kĩama* council and the culprit had to pay one stall-fed ram, which was slaughtered and eaten by the council elders. The ram's stomach contents were rubbed on all the broken fragments to take the power of evil away from the broken gourd.

Fine for Destroying the Divining Gourd (*Mwano*) *of a Medicine-man*

If any person broke or otherwise damaged, either deliberately or accidentally, the divining gourd of a medicine-man, both he and the medicine-man paid a fee of one stall-fed ram to the council for the case to be heard. If guilty, the defendant paid a fine of 100 goats and sheep, together with one stall-fed he-goat to be slaughtered in a ceremony of putting the contents of the divining gourd into a new gourd.

If a man accidentally or deliberately burnt a hut in which a divining gourd was kept, he had to pay 100 goats and sheep for the divining gourd, as well as a fine for burning the hut down.

Case Law

Just as in all criminal cases the council elders had to base their decisions, and the fines and fees which they extracted, upon fixed laws which had been handed down with little or no modification for generations, so in civil cases, in disputes over private rights, the council elders were required to base their verdict, whenever possible, upon case law.

If a case occurred for which the members of the *kĩama* council knew of no comparable precedent, the case was adjourned, and messengers were sent all over the country to the council leaders of outstanding reputation in various territories to see if a precedent could be found, and to find out what the verdict had been and how it was based. Having found a precedent, the man who knew of the case, either by hearsay (traditional case law), or by having taken part in such a case, was brought back to help when the adjourned case was continued. If no precedent could be found, then the council had to make a decision of their own, and this decision, as well as the details (p.1033) of the case were made known all over the country to the other *kĩama* councils so that it might in future be used as a precedent.

Legislation and Execution of Laws

New laws could be made only by the council elders, and they were made from time to time by the elders in council after much consultation The elders of one territorial unit would perhaps decide that some new law was necessary and would send delegates to all the other territorial units to call together all the council elders to discuss the proposed new law with them, and bring back a report as to whether it was acceptable or not. After thus consulting the elders all over the country from the Chania River to the southern boundary, a meeting would be called of representatives from every territory, who would come authorised to make decisions for those they represented.

At this council of elders from all the territories, the whole matter would be further discussed, and when the details of the new law had been agreed upon, the delegates from each territory would return to inform the elders who had sent them of the new law or laws decided upon, and to take steps to make these known to the people.

In every territorial unit the elders called in the warrior leaders, and instructed them to arrange a series of *kĩbaata* dances. The *kĩbaata* dances were held only in order to make important pronouncements to the people, so when the news spread that a *kĩbaata* dance was to be held, everyone knew that some important pronouncements would be made, and every family made sure that at least one of its number, or, if possible, several, should attend. Once a law had been announced at a *kĩbaata*, no one could plead ignorance of it.

By means of a whole series of these *kĩbaata* assemblies new laws were published to the whole population in the space of a very few weeks. The details of how a *kĩbaata* dance was arranged, and the order of proceedings, has been described in Chapter 11.

The Warrior Classes as Tribal Police

The warrior classes, besides providing the military units of the country, which were responsible for defence and for carrying out raids and attacks on the enemy, were responsible for all of what we might describe "police duties". If the elders decided that an inveterate thief was (p.1034) to be put to death or driven out of the country, the leaders of the warrior regiments were called into consultation, and they appointed some of their number to carry out the punishment.

Similarly, at all public functions, such as *kĩbaata* assemblies for the announcing of new laws and repealing of old ones, market gatherings fixed during times of peace with the Maasai, and markets with the traders who came to Ngong, the leaders of the warrior classes were responsible for appointing a certain number of men to keep order. Such men on police duty could strike anyone, including an elder, with either a stick or the flat of a sword, if he refused to obey police orders, and if the person struck tried to hit back he could be set upon and killed.

Moreover, the *kĩama* council of each territory held the leaders of the warrior classes responsible for the public travellers' paths (*njĩra cia agendi*). These were to be kept open, and the warriors were to see to it that bridges on the paths were repaired by the local inhabitants.

The warriors were also expected to watch for thieves and to report them, and to watch for people who broke any law, such as that forbidding drunkenness among young men.

Third Grade Elders as Peacemakers

From time to time the warriors of two territorial units would come to blows with each other, having quarrelled over some matter connected with a dance, or simply because they had taken sides in a personal quarrel between two individuals of their respective companies. In such cases it was not uncommon for a serious fight with spears and swords to take place, with men on both sides getting killed and wounded.

If a third grade elder was anywhere near when such a fight took place, or if someone came and told him that a fight was in progress, it was his duty as a third grade elder to go at once to the scene **and** prevent further bloodshed. All he had to do was to take his *mũthĩgi* staff of office, and as soon as he appeared with this the warriors of both sides had to stop fighting at once. If they failed to do so, the survivors would subsequently be fined very severely indeed by the *kĩama* councils of both areas for having failed to obey a third-grade elder in the execution of his duty.

For a discussion of divorce laws see Chapter 19, and for laws pertaining to inheritance see Chapter 20.

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Chapter 24 – Warfare and Raiding

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Introduction

Kikuyu living south of the Chania River had enemies on two sides, the Maasai and the Akamba. Of these two tribes it was the Maasai who were the traditional enemies of the Kikuyu, and except when a truce was made as described in Chapter 13, the Kikuyu were in a state of perpetual war with the Maasai. The Akamba, on the other hand were not a warlike people, nor had they stock in sufficient quantities for the Kikuyu to consider it worth raiding, so war with the Akamba consisted chiefly of preventing attacks on women who were cutting in the forest, and in sending an occasional expedition into Kamba country to try to recover women who had been raided, for when the Akamba raided it was not for cattle, but for women and girls whom they could sell as slaves to the Arabs.

Owing to the state of perpetual hostilities with the Maasai (except during occasional periods of three or four years or more when a truce existed), Kikuyu warriors were kept well organised as a military force ready to defend the country at a moment's notice, or to take the initiative in raids upon the Maasai. Generally speaking, however, the rainy seasons were periods of truce, simply because neither side was inclined to start hostilities in wet weather.

The fact that Maasai territory abutted on that of the Kikuyu with only a narrow fringe of forest between them (left purposely by the Kikuyu as a form of border defence), meant that the Kikuyu had always to be on the alert, and at no time, except when a truce had been made, was the policy of keeping spies on the border relaxed. These spies served a double purpose. They kept a watch on the movements of the Maasai, and gave warning to the Kikuyu if it seemed likely that the Maasai were preparing for war. They were also able to inform the Kikuyu military leaders of the whereabouts of Maasai villages and herds when the Kikuyu were planning a raid on their enemies.

The Maasai, as a pastoral people, did not keep their cattle or their villages in one place, but wandered all along the Rift Valley from Naivasha to Magadi, and from the plains bordering the Ngong Hills to Nairobi. The Maasai avoided those parts of their territory nearest the Kikuyu border unless their armies were strong and they felt able (p.1036) to defend their stock, but even so they were frequently raided by the Kikuyu when they came there. The Kikuyu, as an agricultural people, were in a more vulnerable position because they had settled villages, and when their armies were weak they could not move out of the enemy's reach, as the Maasai could. For this reason, the Kikuyu adopted the practice of building big fortified villages (*ihingo*) within and behind the forest fringe that served as a barrier between the Maasai and themselves. These fortifications were made so that a small number of Kikuyu could protect themselves from the enemy for days while messages were sent into the interior of Kikuyu country to rally other warriors for help.

Military Organisation

For military purposes, Kikuyu country was divided into a number of territorial units, each consisting of one long ridge or *rũgongo*, many miles long, and the warriors of each ridge formed a fighting unit, which was subdivided into two regiments, the senior and the junior. The senior warrior regiment was always complete and composed of nine initiation age-groups. The junior warrior regiment consisted of more recently initiated age-groups, and would become the senior regiment only when nine such initiation age-groups had been formed. Once thus completed, the junior regiment would start taking over the duties of the senior regiment, and the former regiment would be allowed to give up military activities and retire. Actually, by the time the junior regiment had been completed and taken over power, the oldest members of the senior regiment were quite advanced in years, but until they were formally relieved of their duties and had handed over the

insignia of leadership to the next regiment, they were responsible for all military matters (see Chapter 18).

Each ridge or territorial unit of several miles was further divided into smaller, less formal territorial divisions called *mĩaki* (singular, *mwaki*), each consisting of several villages. At this level too, the fighting units were subdivided into senior and junior regiments, and each of these groups had their own leaders, called the *njama*, or warrior's council.

The warriors' leaders did not all have the same function. Some were *athigani*, whose task it was to scout in Maasai country and lead the armies into war, and others were *athamaki*, responsible for giving instructions, generally ruling over the other warriors, and acting as (p.1037) organisers. But the power of the *athamaki* and the *athigani* was not divided, and they acted after taking counsel together, although in case of dispute the *athigani* were supreme. As we have already seen, the two dances known as *ngurũ* and *kĩbaata* were really part of the military organisation, and they were used as a means of bringing the warriors of the different territorial units together, so that the leaders those units could discuss plans for war and defence and could decide on supreme leaders, chosen from the unit leaders, who would act as a war council in the case of any major military activities.

The senior *athigani* of each territorial unit were the guardians of the *gĩthitũ* (magic charm belonging to the warrior classes of that area). The *athigani* of the junior regiment were *athigani* only in name, and *were* training themselves for the time when they would be *athigani* in the full sense of the word, and would be handed the insignia of this office by the senior regiment when they were about to retire (see Chapter 18). The junior *athigani* had, in fact, no powers when a major raid was going to take place, but they led their companions on locally organised minor raids.

Magic Powders used in Warfare

In addition to the *gĩthitũ*, every fully equipped *mũthigani* carried a number of magic powders obtained from the *mũndũ mũgo wa ita* (the army's medicine-man). These magic powders (*mĩthaiga*) were kept tied in banana bark and were used for various purposes, such as making a man invisible, making the army fearless, making raided cattle easy to drive, and making the enemy afraid. The principal magic powders used and carried by a *mũthigani* were as follows.

Rũthuko

This was made from the powdered roots of *mũhukũũra*. This powder *was believed* to have the power to attract anything that its possessor wished to attract. The *mũthigani* would rub a little of it on the leaves of a growing *mũgere* plant and then wave the plant about saying, "*Ndathuka ng'ombe*" (I entice cattle), or sometimes saying, "*Ndathuka ng'ombe irore gũkũ ciũke itahwo*" (I entice the cattle to proceed in this direction and come to be raided).

p.1038
Thiari

This powder was made from the nests of tick birds, or, failing that, from actual tick birds, but if made from the nests it was more potent. A medicine-man would burn a tick bird's nest and grind the charred remains to a powder, which he made more powerful by spells and formulae. The significance of a tick bird's nest was that it was usually made from hair of animals of all kinds, and especially cattle, and being comprised of cattle hair it attracted cattle. The tick bird itself, being a constant attendant on cattle, was. also therefore regarded as an attraction to cattle. This powder was used to *thiũrũra* (encircle) captured stock so as to make them docile and easily driven.

Itua-nda (*also called Ikanda*)

This powder was made from micaceous sand obtained from North Kikuyu country, the charred remains of a *ndutura* (ring dove), the charred remains of a *kamakia-arũme* (quail), the charred remains of a *gĩthimambũri* (coucal), and the charred remains of a *kamũhembe* (pygmy shrew).

The significance of these ingredients is to be found in some of the beliefs attached to the various birds. The dove was very timid and would make people fearful like itself. The quail got up suddenly and startled people and so would make people easily frightened. The coucal never drank water except when it rained, having never had the sense to realise that there was water in the river, and was therefore a fool and would make people foolish. The shrew could not cross any path without dying, and would cause people to do the same. The reason for the use of mica is not known, except that it was said to make people who beheld it frightened, for which reason it was rubbed into shields.

The *athigani* sprinkled the powder made from these ingredients on the ground behind the raided cattle so that any Maasai armies trying to overtake them would cross this line of powder and become affected with all the weaknesses of the things from which the powder was made, and so be easily driven off. This powder was also rubbed well into leaves and branches overhanging the tracks through the forest leading to Maasai country, so that if any enemies tried to pass that way they would be affected by the powder, become cowardly, and fall an easy prey to attacks by the Kikuyu.

p.1039
Njeehũ

This powder was made from the charred wood and leave1 of *mũtĩ mũũmũ*, *ikũnja*, *mũrembu* (dry fallen leaves only), and *mũrema-thũriũ*. It was believed to be potent as a means of warding off any danger that threatened. A wild animal would not attack a man that had this powder, nor could an enemy do so more than half-heartedly. Therefore, each *mũthigani* would rub some on the shield of each of his men, and also on their foreheads and big toes. In practice it was said to be sufficient if a percentage of the men in each "company" had some powder on his person when going on a raid.

Ūũmũ

To make this powder, the bark of the roots of the creeper called *mũtanda-mbogo* was scraped off, rubbed to a powder, and mixed with castor oil. This powder was supposed to have the power to make men strong, brave, and fleet of foot. Some was put on the shields of the warriors, and each company was encircled (*thiũrũra*) with it before going into action. Because of its valuable properties, *ũũmũ* was also used in many other ceremonies, such as initiation.

***Ita cia Nyarũrũng'a* (*Major Raids*)**

Planning the Raid

Major raids were never organised by the whole of South Kikuyu together, but rather by the fighting forces of about four territorial units together.

The leading warriors of the *njama* council in one territorial unit would decide that they wished to go raiding on a big scale, and would go to their *mũthigani*, who was the keeper of the *gĩthitũ kĩa ita* (war charm), and ask him his opinion as to whether conditions were favourable for a raid. The *mũthigani* and his chief assistant, who was also called *mũthigani*, spent most of their time in Maasai territory spying, and if they said they thought there was a good chance of a successful raid,

the warriors would start planning and let it be known along neighbouring ridges, or territorial units, that a raid was being planned. (p.1040) Then the two *athigani* and four members of the *njama* council of territorial unit that was planning the raid would make plans to go to the medicine-man whom they usually consulted in matters pertaining to war. They took with them a number of presents, which by custom had to consist of goat and sheep skins and lumps of Magadi soda.

Having arrived at the medicine-man's home, they informed him of their business, telling him that they were planning a raid, and that they had come to consult him as to whether the raid would be successful or not, and to know which routes they were to take and what omens to avoid. The seer then cast his *mbũgũ* (divining pebbles) from his divining gourd to find out what the prospects were. He poured the pebbles into little piles (*ciikĩrio*) on his special oxhide, which was kept for this purpose. Then the four members of the *njama* council who had accompanied the *athigani* set to work to count the piles so that the seer might interpret them. The *athigani* merely watched.

The seer interpreted the piles according to the number of objects in each, and also according to the contents of the piles, for his pebbles were not all actual pebbles, but included a great variety of objects such as beads, bits of metal, cowrie shells, and bits of bone, each of which had a special meaning known only to the seer himself.

If the interpretation was favourable to a raid, the seer gave them a list of instructions to be followed in carrying out the raid. He told them that the omens indicated, for example, that if they went by such-and-such a route into Maasai country they would be successful; that on no account were they to sleep under such-and-such a condition, or they would all be killed in their sleep; that if they found such-and-such an omen in their path as they went they had to abandon the raid and return home; and that when they had raided the cattle they were to bring them back to Kikuyu country by such-and-such a route. He also gave them detailed instructions as to which of the animals that were raided were to be regarded as his special perquisites. For instance, he would say any ox with irregular horns, one turned up and the other down, was to be his, a cow of such-and-such a colour was to be his, etc. making any selection he liked, and these animals, when the raiding party returned home, were always handed over.

After the "pebbles" had been interpreted favourably, the members of the *njama* council and the *athigani* went off a little way and cut a number of sticks of different plants and proceeded to *cuka* (cast lots with) them privately. Each stick was allotted a special meaning: one might represent success, another death at night while sleeping, a third, failure if the route mentioned by the seer was taken. In addition, they had a stick to represent each of the major points emphasised by (p.1041) the seer. They took these sticks back to the seer, and the six men spat on them to "bless" them. They handed them to the seer and asked him to pick out the stick among the whole number that represented their fate on the forthcoming raid. This was done in order to make absolutely sure that no mistake had been made in the counting and interpreting of the pebbles. The medicine-man took the sticks one by one, shook them, put them to his ears and listened to them, paused a while, and either discarded the stick or retained it according to what it told him. After doing this with all the sticks, he was left with one or two which he had retained, and he handed these back saying, "These are your sticks". In the event of the sticks giving the same information as the pebbles, and being favourable, all was well and proceedings could continue normally, but if by any chance the seer selected a stick representing death for all, smashing defeat, or other ill fortune contrary to what the pebbles had indicated, the pebbles had to be thrown again. This time they were poured out on the mat over the sticks, and if the pebbles again contradicted the sticks, the result of the two

pebble throws was accepted, and the raid plans went forward. If, however, the pebbles on this second occasion supported what the sticks had indicated, the whole plan was dropped.

If, when the first lot of pebbles were thrown, the seer interpreted them as being unfavourable, he would tell the warriors at once that the omens were bad, and that they had to go through the ceremony of *kuohorũo* with a sacrifice (being untied, that is, freed from ceremonial uncleanness). Having instructed them to do this, he re-cast the pebbles and found out whether the omens indicated that this ceremony should be performed at the homestead of one of the senior elders, or at the sacred tree of the territory concerned. This point having been decided, the warriors went off to perform the ceremony, which is described below.

When the six warriors had set off to consult the seer, some of the other warriors had gone with them to prepare food to be eaten either during the proceedings if they were protracted, or afterwards. These warriors did not go right to the seer's hut, but sat a little way away and roasted yams and ate sugar-cane. The six men who were consulting the seer could not take this food with their hands, either during or immediately after the proceedings, but were handed it wrapped in banana bark, in which they held it as they ate. Further, after consulting a medicine-man, no one could shake hands with them or touch them for 24 hours, and anyone who inadvertently did so had to kill a ram for purification.

The *athigani* then told the members of the *njama* council to pass the word round, not only to their own warriors, but also to the leaders of (p.1042) those territorial units that wished to accompany them on this raid to meet together on a certain dance field in three or four days' time (as the case might be). The *athigani* then went straight off to Maasai country to spy out the land once more and make their own plans for the raid in accordance with the information and instructions gives them by the seer.

Before we discuss the further preparations for such a raid we must pause for a moment and examine the ceremonies connected with *kuohora aanake,* which had to be performed if the pebbles, when first cast, had been unfavourable. As we have seen, these ceremonies were conducted either at a homestead or at the sacred tree of the territory concerned, according to the decision given by the casting of the pebbles

The Ceremony of Kuohora Aanake at a Homestead

When the *athigani* and members of the *njama* council were told that they had to have the *kuohora* ceremony performed for them at some elder's homestead, they went off and told all the warriors of their territorial unit that they were to assemble in two days' time at such- and-such a homestead for this ceremony to be performed. Even members of the warrior class who were not going to join in the raiding party for one reason or another had to come for the ceremony, which affected all the warriors of both the senior and junior regiments. Messages were sometimes sent inviting a few warriors to come from the neighbouring territorial units that had intended to join in the raid, but this was not essential, and was done out of politeness more than out of necessity, for they were not really concerned, as the projected raid belonged to the warriors of the territorial unit which had planned it.

The leaders of the *njama* council told one of the warriors in their party who owed the warriors as a whole a goat for some fee or other to produce a big he-goat of a single colour and take it on the appointed day to the homestead which had been selected for the ceremony.

The site of the ceremony had to be the homestead of the father of one of the warriors concerned, and this warrior was told to warn his father to have honey beer brewed ready for the ceremony. The warrior's father was also responsible for sending messages to eight other senior elders, summoning them to come on the morning of the ceremony with their senior wives.

Early on the appointed morning, before the other people arrived, the owner of the village by himself poured out beer and prayed in the (p.1043) courtyard, to God first, and then to the ancestral spirits, asking that the ceremony might be efficacious, and asking for blessing on all the warriors. His wife did not participate in these prayers. Then all the warriors assembled at the homestead entrance, as did the elders who were to officiate at the ceremony, and the honey beer was poured off into a *nyanja* gourd, four elders each taking a little and spitting it on to *mũkenia* and *mũthakwa* leaves. These leaves were then used to strike a he-goat on its face and its back to "bless" it and make it the propitious sacrifice.

After the he-goat had been blessed, it was slaughtered, skinned, cut up, and treated in the way that was customary (see Chapter 7). While all the meat was roasting, the four elders cut the whole skin into narrow strips about 15in. long and ¼in. wide, which as they were cut were placed on leaves spread for the purpose. When all these rawhide strips (*ngwaro*) were ready they were picked up and put into a winnowing tray to be blessed. Beer was brought, together with a drinking horn, a gourd drinking cup, and some *nyekiya kĩgombe* grass. Each of the four elders and their wives then rubbed *ira* powder on his or her tongue, lips, the roof of the palate, throat, and navel, and they also put *ira* on each of the rawhide strips in the winnowing tray. This done, each of the four elders took a mouthful of the grass and of beer and spat it out over the grass and rawhide strips to "bless" them. The four women each sipped beer from the gourd drinking cup and spat it out over the rawhide strips, but they did not take a mouthful of grass. Some plain honey was then put on to the rawhide strips as well, and they were all well rubbed with this as a final step before being put on to the warriors.

The warriors were then summoned, and leaving their spears, shields, swords, and clubs out in the entrance area, they entered the courtyard and formed up in a wide circle round the fire where the sacrificial beast was being roasted. The four elders then took the rawhide strips and went into the circle, two to the side of the circle nearest the entrance to the homestead, and two to the side nearest the senior wife s hut. Each pair of elders started putting the rawhide strips on to the middle finger of each warrior's right hand, having first put one on his own right-hand middle finger. The members of each pair of elders went in opposite directions, thus, two elders worked clockwise, and two countcr-clockwise. As each warrior had a rawhide strip put on his finger he wound the long, hanging part of it round his wrist.

Once each warrior had been given his rawhide strip, the four elders went to the sacrificial fire in the centre of the ring, and picked up the two roasted shoulders (*moko*), and the two roasted half-saddle joints (p.1044) (*makengeto*). Each elder took one joint, and they went as before in pairs to the points where they had started putting on the rawhide strips. They each handed one joint to one of the warriors, who took it in his hands, tore off a big piece with his teeth, and passed it to the man next to him, so that all had a bite of this sacrificial meat. This done the warriors were told to go back to the entrance, pick up their weapons, and arm themselves. Meanwhile, the elders made a big bonfire on the place where the animal had been slaughtered. The warriors then filed back into the courtyard and went round the fire, jumping up and down and shouting songs of victory (*rũũhia*).

After this, the warriors dispersed to their own homes and the elders and their wives ate the rest of the roasted meat and drank the beer that was left over. The warriors went once more to consult the seer, and the omens were then probably good, and preparations proceeded as described above.

The Ceremony of Kuohora Aanake at a Sacred Tree

As we have seen, the medicine-man sometimes directed that the ceremony was not to take place at a homestead, but rather, at the territorial sacred tree. In this case the warriors decided upon a day for the ceremony and messages were sent to all the warriors to assemble at the sacred tree on the appointed day, except eight of them who would go to escort the elders who were coming to perform the ceremony. The warriors also made arrangements for one of their number to provide a he-goat of a single colour—all black, all white, or all brown— and they asked one elder, who was father of one of the warriors concerned, to have sugar-cane and honey beer brewed in readiness for that day. An ordinary medicine-man, not the *wa ita* one or special one, consulted over matters of war, was also asked by the elders to be present at the sacred tree on that day to provide magic powders to be put on the fire.

On the appointed morning the eight warriors who had been chosen for this purpose went to the home of the elder who had been asked to brew the beer, and when they arrived some of the sugar-cane beer and all of the honey beer was poured off from the *ndua* gourds and mixed together. Some of this was put into a *gĩtete* bottle gourd and some into a *mũcema* gourd. The rest of the plain sugar-cane beer was left behind in the home to be drunk later in the day by council elders.

The warriors then escorted the eight elders and the man at whose (p.1045) home the beer had been brewed down to the sacred tree, one of the warriors leading the goat and two of the elders carrying the beer. The elders also took a gourd cup and a drinking horn. Having arrived at the tree, they found all the warriors assembled ready and waiting, together with the medicine-man. The first step was for four of the eight elders to pour some of the beer in the *gĩtete* bottle gourd into the drinking horn, and some into the gourd cup. They advanced to the tree and prayed to it, the words of the prayer not being in any set formula, but always to the same effect, for example, "We come to you, O Tree, who was set up by God and made to grow, and who was chosen by us as a place to pray for the welfare of our people. We make offerings to you, O Tree, and ask that you will bless our warriors and bless this ceremony we are about to perform for them". The elders then poured the beer from the drinking horn at the foot of the tree on the side nearest to Mount Kenya, and the beer from the drinking gourd cup on the opposite side. After pouring out beer for the tree, the same four elders poured a second lot of beer into the drinking horn and cup, and two drank from the horn and two from the cup. Having done so, they spat some over their breasts as an act of blessing. Next they held the live goat first towards Mount Kenya, then facing Donyo Sabuk, the Aberdares, and finally Ngong. With the goat held towards each of the mountains in turn, they prayed to God for his blessing on the warriors, and on the ceremony. This done, they slaughtered the goat by throttling it, and when its blood had been drawn into a half-gourd they used it to pray to God first in one Mountain, then the next, and so on. Some of this blood was also poured out at each of the places where the beer had been poured at the foot of the tree.

After the meat was cut up, and while it was roasting, four elders proceeded to specially treat the skin before cutting it up into rawhide strips. A special mixture was prepared for the treatment. One elder went to a nearby stream and brought water in a banana leaf or edible arum leaf. Honey was mixed with this, as well as the following magic powders added by the medicine-man in attendance:

mũcanjamũka, *rũthuko*, *kĩnoria*, and *thiari* (also called *mũũnga*). This mixture was then sprinkled on to and rubbed into the skin before it was cut up.

While this was being done, the elders drank at intervals from the *mũcema* gourd, having first refilled the *gĩtete* bottle gourd and laid it aside.

The warriors were told to lay aside their weapons and come and form a big circle round the sacrificial fire, starting at the foot of the tree in such a way that the tree was included in the circle in place of (p.1046) one warrior. The four elders entered the circle and proceeded to put the rawhide strips on to the right-hand middle fingers of each of the warriors as in the ceremony at the homestead. The elders gave the two shoulder joints and the two-half-saddle joints to the warriors to eat as in the case of the ceremony at the village. Having eaten these while standing, the warriors sat down and were given more of the meat to eat, but no bone might be broken, as these bones were to be made into a burnt offering presently.

When the meat had been consumed, the elders built up the fire with more fuel, and on to this they put the wood of the roasting platform, the leaves used to put the meat on, the stomach contents of the animal, and all its bones. The medicine-man put on some of each of the four powders named before. While this fire was being prepared, the warriors rearmed themselves and formed three or four concentric rings round the fire, marching round and round it (jumping up and down and shouting songs of victory (*rũũhia*). Every warrior had to get into the smoke of the fire as he marched round, so as to be purified by the magic powders that were burning.

This done, the warriors dispersed, leaving the elders alone at the tree. The elders sat down round the smouldering fire, drinking beer and spitting it out over themselves, at the same time uttering blessings on the warriors. Then they took the *gĩtete* bottle gourd of beer which had been set aside earlier, and poured out some of this beer at the side of the fire nearest the tree, then some at the opposite side of the fire, and then some on the other sides of the fire, saying each time as they did so, "*Twahoria ũhiũhu wa mbaara*" (We calm down, or disperse, all the ceremonial uncleanness of war, literally, We cool the heat of war). Then they poured three more lots of beer at the side of the fire nearest the tree, saying, "*Twahoria ũũru wothe ũngĩkora aanake aitũ*" (We disperse all the evil that might come upon our warriors). They repeated this at the foot of the tree. The rest of the beer in the *gĩtete* bottle gourd was poured on to the middle of the fire to put it out, and at the same time they said, "*Twahoria ũũru wothe*" (We disperse all evil). The elders then went back to the village where the beer had been brewed, and were joined there by other council elders, who came to share the rest of the sugar-cane beer that had been left there in the morning.

This ceremony having been completed, the warriors again sent their leaders to consult the seer and to prepare for a big raid on the Maasai.

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A Third Ceremony of Kuohora, Involving Sympathetic Magic

There was yet another form of the ceremony of *kuohora* to make warriors successful in their raids upon the Maasai. This ceremony, which was chiefly, dependent upon sympathetic magic, was carried out only if the warriors of a village had made several consecutive unsuccessful raids. The details varied considerably from one village to another, but in general principles the procedure was as follows. The elders of the village concerned arranged with one of their number to brew beer made from a mixture of honey and sugar-cane juice, and in the evening, when the beer was brewed, the elders came and built two miniature cattle enclosures. One of these they built out in the bush

beyond the entrance to the homestead where the ceremony was to take place, while the other was constructed by the men's hut in the homestead. Into the cattle enclosure built in the bush they put a large number of solanum berries, *ndongu*, to represent Maasai stock. The cattle enclosure in the homestead was left empty.

That night a he-goat was put to sleep in the hut where the beer was brewing, and the *ndua* (large beer vessels), were wound round with creepers of the plant called *mũimba-igũrũ*. There had to be at least two *ndua* of beer brewing, and one of these was the special ceremonial brew from which an offering to God would be made. Early next morning the man and his wife carried this *ndua*, with the *mũimba-igũrũ* creepers still round it, into the courtyard. Instead of the usual offering of beer to the ancestral spirits, the man dipped a horn into the *ndua*, and holding it towards Mount Kenya, he prayed to God in that mountain, and then threw the beer from the horn in the direction of the mountain, praying at the same time that the warriors might be blessed and that the ceremony which was to be performed might be successful. He repeated this offering and prayer, facing each of the three other sacred mountains in turn. Then he dipped a gourd drinking cup into the *ndua* and prayed to God, saying, "*Iyũkia, Ngai, tondũ hatirĩ andũ mathiaga aiki; ke ya atumia anyu*" (Take this too, God, for since no one goes alone, this is for your wives). This was one of the very few Kikuyu prayers that suggested that God had a wife or wives, though the form of service often suggested this.

Having offered beer from the gourd drinking cup to God's wives in all four sacred mountains, some beer was put into a *gĩtete* bottle gourd and taken back to the hut for use later in the day. The rest of the beer from the other *ndua* was poured out into *kĩnya* gourds and taken back to the hut.

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The he-goat was slaughtered by some of the warriors, all of whom had been made to come to this homestead for the ceremony. The meat was roasted, and from the skin the elders made rawhide strips for every warrior present, and when this was put on his arm, each warrior also had some of the *mũimba-igũrũ* creeper tied round his right arm. Then the elders took four joints as in the other *ohora* ceremonies, and made each warrior take a ceremonial bite of the meat. This done, the warriors were told to dash off and raid the Maasai, and on this order they dashed to the miniature cattle enclosure out in the bush, each seized as many solanum berries as he could, and rushed back, singing the songs of victory and jumping up and down (*rũũhia*). They chanted both the *ndũũhiũ ya ng'ombe* and the *ndũũhiũ ya mũndũ* (songs of triumph for capturing cattle and for killing a man), and the elders and women went out to meet them, the women ululating. The warriors put all the berries into the miniature cattle enclosure in the homestead, thus symbolizing a successful raid. This done, the elders poured out the beer that was put aside in the *gĩtete* bottle gourd on either side of the entrance to the miniature cattle enclosure (which now contained the solanum berries), and also on its four sides and in the middle. As they did so they prayed to the ancestors, male and female, to give the warriors success, to give milk to the village, and wealth. This done, the warriors were certain to be successful next time they went raiding, and plans were begun.

Having thus considered the ceremonies necessary if the omens were not propitious when the seer was approached in connection with a major raid, we can now continue the study of what happened in the organisation of a raid once the preliminary arrangements had been made.

Final Preparations for a Major Raid

After making a final examination of the country where the raid was to be made, the *athigani* came back and met a representative gathering of the warriors, not only of the territorial unit that was

organising the raid, but also representatives of the other units that were going to join them. The warriors took with them a ram, or some other animal, to be killed and eaten by the *athigani* to refresh them when they returned. At this meeting the *athigani* told the leaders the outline of their plans, and instructed them to go off and pass the word to every warrior who was going on the raid to get ready. This preparation (p.1049) consisted of getting food cooked and packed, sharpening their weapons, and generally preparing themselves.

There was no compulsory service for a warrior, and the question of whether a man would or would not go on any particular raid was left to him and his father to decide. A warrior normally was anxious to go, as a raid gave a great prospect of wealth and also of honour. On the other hand, a warrior might be unable to go for a variety of reasons. For instance, if he was already married there might be some ceremony in his home that required his attendance, or some work in the fields that he had to do; an unmarried warrior might be told not to go by his father, if he was wanted for duty protecting the herds when they went out to graze, or if he was wanted to escort the cattle to the salt licks· On the whole, however, very few warriors voluntarily stayed at home when a raid was planned, and more often than not their elders found it difficult to keep enough warriors back for defence purposes. A warrior who never went raiding soon acquired the reputation of being a coward, and had great difficulty in getting a wife.

Every warrior who was going was told of a rendezvous fixed by the *athigani* just within the Kikuyu borders, and the warriors went there in twos and threes, assembled, and waited for their leaders. Each warrior got his mother to prepare him the food he needed, which was called *mũũndũa*, the warriors' equivalent of *rĩgu* (food to eat on a journey). This *mũũndũa* usually consisted of the following foods: bulrush millet parched and husked and put into a *thũngĩ* (dried ox bladder), parched sorghum, sweet potatoes threaded on to a string to make them easier to carry, bananas and maize cooked together and tied up in banana bark to be eaten cold, and roasted green bananas. Sometimes four or five warriors would contribute to the price of a ram or goat and take it with them to the place appointed for the army to assemble, where they killed it and carried the cooked meat on the raid from there.

Any warrior who had never before been in Maasai country was expected to bring more food than he needed for himself, and to hand over a portion to the other warriors as a fee. This was called *ndũma ya Waithaka*.

It was very important that the food that an unmarried warrior was going to take on a raid should be prepared for him only by his mother or by a woman who stood in the relationship of mother to him if his own mother was dead. A married warrior could have his food prepared by his wife, but it was absolutely taboo for an unmarried girl who had reached puberty to take any share in the preparation of such food, and this taboo included a young married woman who had not yet had a baby. The reason given was that if a girl had a menstrual period (p.1050) while the warriors were away, and if she had helped to prepare any of their food, then they would become *ohwo* (tied up), and could not be successful. If a married woman who had borne children and who had therefore *ohoka* (become untied through having given birth), had a period while the warrior for whom she had prepared food was away, it did not matter.

As his war kit, each warrior took his sword, spear, shield, and a club or two, and he also took, as a "uniform", a head-dress of the *gĩtukũ* type (made of feathers) or *thũmbĩ* type (made of a lion's mane or baboon skin), his feather cloak (*riba*), and his usual ornaments, but not the colobus monkey fur ornaments (*maruku* anklets or *thaba* leg ornaments). Each warrior wore his cloak, not

over his shoulder, but tied round his waist double so as to make a short kilt. In addition to this, every warrior took his knee rattle (*kĩĩgamba*), which was not worn at this stage, but was stuffed up with leaves to stop it sounding, and then tied round his neck. Every warrior also had his cloth poncho (*rerai*), but rather than wear it, he carried it in a small leather bag on his back. He also took one or two big white ostrich feathers in a bamboo container. The poncho, knee rattles, and ostrich feathers were donned just before the warriors made their attack.

The *mũthigani*, his assistant, and the leaders of the warriors' council did not go to the place appointed for the assembling of the warriors until a day later, so as to give time for all of the others to assemble. The *mũthigani* took his insignia of office, the *gĩthitũ*, and the *njama* leaders accompanied the *mũthigani* and carried the *coro* war horns.

If the warriors of several other territorial units were joining the territorial unit that had planned the raid, their *athigani* and their *njama* leaders also went on the raid, and they, too, did not accompany the rank and file, but went to the site chosen for the assembling of the army on the following day. The *mũthigani* of each of the territorial units took his *gĩthitũ* with him, for this, in addition to being the insignia of office, was a potent war charm which had to be used before the various territorial companies actually made their attack on the enemy. When the *mũthigani* and the *njama* leaders of each of the territorial units going on the raid had joined their armies at the appointed place, the various *athigani* joined the *mũthigani* who was leading the raid (that is, the one from the territorial unit organising the raid), and so did the various *njama* leaders. This group of *athigani* and *njama* leaders then took counsel with the chief *mũthigani*, who told them his plans while they sat round their own fire and ate by themselves a little apart from the other warriors.

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The Raid Itself

Next morning the army set off for the place chosen for the next night's camp in Maasai country. The chief *mũthigani* led them, and he alone knew the exact spot where he thought it was safe for the army to sleep. Unless the Maasai were a very long way from the border, one day's march from the Kikuyu border brought the army within striking distance, so that night everybody knew that the time for the raid was at hand. The chief *mũthigani* and the other *athigani* and *njama* members spent the evening deciding which division each warrior was to join. They divided the warriors into three divisions called *gĩtungati* (the reserve), *ngerewani* (the advance guard), and *mũrima* (the rear guard).

The powers of the *athigani* once a raid was organised and until it was over were absolute, and no warrior of lower rank could question any order given by the *mũthigani* of his territorial unit. A *mũthigani* could order a warrior to go home without giving any reason, he could take a warrior's weapons from him and give them to some other warrior who was less well armed, he could strike any "ranker" with a stick without retaliation, and he could demand a share of any ranker's food and rations. This absolute power was essential, for if on a raid any warrior had the right to question orders, the whole organisation would collapse, and failure would be certain. The *mũthigani* was able to ensure that his orders were obeyed by the fact that he had the *gĩthitũ* and the magic powders, and the knowledge to make use of them, and if a warrior failed to obey, he could be punished by having the benefits of these things withheld from him.

Given the absolute authority of the *athigani*, therefore, no warrior could protest against his divisional assignment. The men making up the *gĩtungati* (reserve) were chosen from the very best and most distinguished warriors in the army, and any man who had proved himself to be a really

fine fighter was put into the *gĩtungati*, because theirs was the most important task, namely, that of acting as a bodyguard to the *athigani*. This was not because the *athigani's* lives were so precious, but because the *athigani* carried the *ithitũ* (war charms), and if these fell into the hands of the enemy it was not only a terrible disgrace, but a disaster of the first magnitude. The *ithitũ*, in fact, were the equivalent of the "standards" of the armies of Europe, and at all costs had to be kept safe.

The *ngerewani* (advance guard) was composed of the young warriors, some of them out on a raid for the first time, and out to prove themselves (p.1052) men. Their task was to make the first move, attack the Maasai, drive off their cattle, and kill as many Maasai as possible. The *ngerewani* was divided into as many companies as there were territorial units taking part in the raid, and each was given strict orders as to the part they were to play. Some were sent to attack the Maasai from the front, and other groups were sent by different routes so as to make flank attacks at the same time.

The warriors chosen to form the *mũrima* (rear guard) were the older warriors who had already served in many raids and who were no longer so fleet of foot, or so active as they had been. The task of the *mũrima* was to wait until the raided cattle were brought to them and then drive them back to Kikuyu country while the *gĩtungati and ngerewani* together beat off any attempt on the part of the Maasai to recapture their stock.

All these arrangements having been made, the warriors went to sleep, and at dawn next morning they performed the ceremony of *gũthiũrũra* (encircling) the armies with the *ithitũ* charms. The "company" of each territorial unit sat down in a different place, and each *mũthigani* chose one warrior who was fleet of foot to carry the *gĩthitũ* of that company round the seated company, running as fast as possible. The *mũthigani* then laid the *gĩthitũ* on the ground, and the company (forming single file) came one at a time to the *gĩthitũ*, stepped over it with the right foot first, and went on about 200yds and sat down. The companies then divided up according to the instructions issued the night before, those detailed for the *gĩtungati* and *mũrima* assembling together, while the *ngerewani* companies prepared for the fray. Their knee rattles were unstoppered and put on, as well as their cloth ponchos, and they stuck their white ostrich feathers in the top of their *gĩtukũ* or *thũmbĩ* head-dresses.

The *ngerewani* companies then set off as fast as they could to make their attack, and as soon as they sighted the enemy, they let out wild war cries and rushed to the attack, first of all fighting the Maasai warriors who were guarding the cattle, and then driving off the cattle and keeping a careful watch for surprise attacks, for the Maasai were also not lacking in knowledge and tactics, and it was quite possible that their spies had seen the Kikuyu army approaching and had set ambushes for them.

If the *ngerewani* were successful, they drove the captured stock as fast as possible to where they had left the *gĩtungati* and *mũrima*, and handed the captured animals over to the *mũrima*, who, together with the *athigani*, drove the stock towards the Kikuyu border. The *ngerewani* and the *gĩtungati* then waited for the Maasai counter-attack, for the (p.1053) alarm would certainly have been given, and in an hour or two the Maasai warriors were sure to appear and attempt to recover their stock.

If all went well, the *ngerewani* and *gĩtungati* managed to hold off any attempt by the Maasai to rally and overtake the raided stock, the *mũrima* and *athigani* would drive the stock just to the forest borders, and wait there for the *ngerewani* and the *gĩtungati*.

Sometimes when the Kikuyu had made an effective raid and the *ngerewani* had handed over the raided cattle to the *mũrima* and the *athigani* and were waiting to defend the rear, the Maasai would rally in such numbers that the Kikuyu army could not hold them. In such case, one or two warriors were despatched at once to warn the *mũrima* and the *athigani* that the Kikuyu could not hold the enemy for long, and that the Maasai would soon be upon them. Thus warned, the mũrima would at once divide the cattle into small bunches and drive them off thus in all directions, so as to make it harder for the Maasai to overtake them, and to give a better chance of getting them back to Kikuyu country. The *athigani*, in such circumstances, were expected to make for Kikuyu country with all possible speed so as to prevent any chance of the precious *ithitũ* falling into enemy hands.

On the other hand, if the Kikuyu were unable to make a successful raid because they found that the Maasai had heard of the attack and were ready for them, they attempted to fight, but if the Maasai were present in great numbers they retreated as soon as they had given the *athigani* with the precious *ithitũ* time to get away. Then the *gĩtungati* and *ngerewani* would fight a rearguard action, retreating all the time until they got to the forest fringes, where they would scatter, knowing that the Maasai would dare not follow.

However, if the *ngerewani* were having a stiff battle with the Maasai, but were not hopelessly outnumbered, the *athigani* might send the *gĩtungati* in to make a flank attack, and, if possible, turn the tide.

Any Kikuyu warrior who had killed a Maasai warrior and taken his spear, sword, and shield from him was not expected to fight any more, but to go straight off and catch up with the *mũrima* to help them with the cattle, for he now had to carry two shields and two spears, and obviously was not in a position to fight. Probably, too, he was slightly wounded. The only condition under which such a man would take any further part in a fight was if the *mũrima* was overtaken by the Maasai, in which case he would abandon his spoils, fight in self-defence, and in defence of the stock.

If a man was severely wounded in the fighting, but the Kikuyu were not hard pressed, they would try to help their wounded comrade back (p.1054) to safety, but if a man was so seriously wounded that he needed to be actually carried, it was seldom that his companions could do much for him, in fact, it was a recognised thing that such a man should refuse to be carried and tell his companions to leave him. If they tried to carry him it would make their progress so slow that they would probably be overtaken by Maasai reinforcements and all killed.

The other warriors always carried the spears and shields of their wounded companions once the Maasai had been beaten off, but they never took the weapons of any of their own number who were killed in the fray. They left them there with the corpses to be found by the Maasai. The only person who could and would take home the weapons of a dead Kikuyu warrior was a brother, because if any other Kikuyu warrior took them, he might later be accused by the deceased's relatives of having killed the deceased himself.

Dividing the Spoils

While actually driving off the raided cattle, the *ngerewani* warriors, if they saw an animal they particularly fancied, were entitled to mark it in some special way so as to claim it as their own later when the spoils were divided. The usual way for a warrior to mark such an animal was to rub his finger in his red ochred hair, or on his body, and make a mark with the red ochre under the animal's leg.

When all the warriors of the *gĩtungati* and *ngerewani* arrived at the place where the *mũrima* and the *athigani* had halted, the *athigani* and *njama* set to work to divide the cattle. First of all the *mũthigani* and the *njama* who belonged to the territorial unit that had planned the raid, and who had consulted the medicine-man, picked out the animals that answered the description given to them by the seer, and these they set on one side so that no one could touch them. Then all the *athigani* and *njama* selected animals for themselves, as leaders, and made their own private marks on them with red ochre. This done, the *athigani* and the *njama* called for every warrior who had killed a Maasai, and they were sent in to select one animal each for themselves, which was their's over and above any other share that would come to them presently. This done, the remaining animals were divided by the *athigani* and *njama* into as many divisions as there were territorial units taking part in the raid, and the animals set aside for each territorial unit were all marked with one mark. The further division of these animals among the individual members of the units was left to their respective *njama* leaders.

p.1055
Each company then took charge of that portion of the herd allotted to it, and drove it through Kikuyu country till they were nearly at their own territorial area. Then the leaders of the *njama* halted the warriors and proceeded to divide the animals among individual members of their company. The division was never equal, and the number of animals given to any one warrior depended upon his standing in the company and the way he had acquitted himself on the raid. Some warriors would get ten animals, others five, some only one, or even a bare half share in a cow or heifer. The division made by the leaders could not be disputed, but on the other hand, they were not likely to make a division that did not meet with the approval of the majority of their company, as if they did, they might be deposed. A few individuals always considered they had been unfairly treated and thought they deserved a bigger share, but being in a minority, they could do nothing.

If by any chance a warrior had privately marked an animal with his own mark when driving the animals off in the first instance, and it was later found that this animal was one that answered to the description of the animals the medicine-man had earmarked for himself, the rest of the warriors would club together and give him ten ewes in place of this cow, which was then sent off to the medicine-man. They dared not do otherwise, for if they went against the medicine-man's orders he would not help them on future occasions. The warrior who had marked the cow for himself equally dared not refuse to exchange it for the ten ewes, for if he did not, the medicine-man would curse the animal and it would die, and then he would have nothing.

Return of the Army

As the warriors of each territorial unit approached their home territory, they were met by all of their people, who would have already heard the news of their approach and would be waiting to welcome them, *gũtũinga ciana* (to go out to meet the children). The women and girls uttered peal after peal of *ngemi* (ululations), and the warriors gave vent to the war songs and jumped about in the air as they did so, (*rũhia*). The rejoicing was very great, and all warriors who had not killed a Maasai were escorted by the members of their homesteads and villages to their homes.

At their respective homes, each warrior's mother untied his sword belt and took his sword, shield, and spear into her own hut. There was no further special ceremony for these warriors until next day, when (p.1056) any who had taken part in a raid for the first time would have to give the *kĩama* council a *mbũri ya hako* (a goat or ram for appeasement).

Those who had killed a Maasai in the fighting were not, however allowed to enter their own homesteads, or any other, on that day, but were taken by the elders of the area to a banana grove, where they had to remain for the rest of that day and night. They were kept company by other warriors who had only captured cattle and had not killed an enemy, but no one except the old men might touch them or even shake hands with them, for they had defilement and death upon them, and had first to be purified.

If the warriors came back fairly early in the day, the fathers of those warriors who had killed a Maasai for the first time had to send their sons a goat or a ram, which the sons passed on at once to the council elders of the area as *mbũri ya hako* (a goat or ram for appeasement). This was slaughtered by the council elders at once, and one front leg (*guoko*), one half-saddle joint (*ikengeto*), and the first three ribs of one side with part of the sternum attached (*kĩĩga*), were sent to the warrior and his companions in the banana grove. If, on the other hand, the warriors came back late in the evening, this ram or goat for the council elders was not handed over until next morning, but the important thing was that any warrior who had killed a Maasai for the first time could not proceed to his purification ceremony until the *kĩama* council had been given and had slaughtered the *mbũri ya hako*.

Once a warrior had given the *kĩama* council this *mbũri ya hako* after killing his first Maasai, he never had to do so again, and whenever he again killed a Maasai he could proceed to his purification at once; such a warrior had, however, to spend the first night after he got back in the banana grove.

In the banana grove that night, the only wood that the warriors might use for their fire was banana props, taken from some of the banana trees. All other wood was taboo at this time.

From this point until the whole of the *ina kaarĩ* and *ita kaarĩ* ceremonies were over (that is, the period of singing and dancing the triumph song), the father of each warrior who had killed a Maasai had to refrain from sexual contact with all women. Otherwise, he would risk bringing death to his family. Once the warrior had finally *ita kaarĩ* and had been *tahĩkio* (cleansed), his father had to go first and have ceremonial sexual intercourse with the warrior's mother (or if she was dead, her representative); he could then start normal relations with his other wives as and when he liked.

p.1057

Purification of a Warrior who had Killed an Enemy

Next morning, the elders of the area all repaired to the big dancing field of the district, as did any warriors who had killed a Maasai in the past, but had not done so on this occasion, and they lit a big fire and waited for those warriors who were to be purified. Each warrior coming to be purified brought a big, fat ram called *ndũrũme ya kwenjwo* (the ram for the shaving ceremony). This was given to the very senior elders of the territory, who slaughtered it and ate it there on the field, sharing the meat with no one, as it was *mbũri ya gĩkuũ* (a ram of death), and could be eaten only by very senior elders. The other elders were slaughtering the goats and rams given as *mbũri cia hako* by the warriors who had been on a raid for the first time, and the warriors were slaughtering the *mbũri cia ndũũhiũ* which any warrior who had not *rũũhia*-d before had to give to his fellow warriors.

Each warrior who had killed an enemy was taken by one of the senior elders, who might not be a relative, and the elder cut off all his long hair with a knife. Meanwhile, other elders had brought water in banana leaves, and into this water was put the stomach contents of the *mbũri ya kwenjwo*.

The elder who had cut the warrior's hair then rubbed stomach contents all over the warrior's head and face, after which the warrior had to wash the whole of his body in this water mixed with stomach contents. The same elder then rubbed *ira* powder on to the warrior's forehead and the bridge of his nose, and the warrior took the hair that was cut off his head, and any feathers that were attached to it, into the bush, where they were buried or hidden under a thick bush. The warrior's sword was then rubbed with fat from the slaughtered animal.

The warrior brought the sword of the Maasai he had killed to one of his father's brothers, and the spear to another of his father's brothers. The shield he put in his father's hut. He then went with his own weapons to his own hut, and not to his mother's hut, and took off his own sword, instead of letting his mother do it for him, as warriors who had not killed an enemy had to do.

The warrior slept in his father's hut, and next morning came the second purification, which took place in the father's homestead, with the slaughter of a ram or he-goat called *mbũri ya Kũgurarĩria*.

In the morning his mother prepared a special new lot of castor oil and put it into a *kĩnandũ* gourd. Meanwhile, the father and some other elders slaughtered the ram or goat that was for this sacrifice. While the two half-saddle joints (*makengeto*), one foreleg (*guoko*), the intestines (p.1058) (*mara*), and the first chamber of the stomach (*ihu rĩa maĩ*) were roasting the mother made her son sit down on a bed board (*kĩhengere*), and she shaved his head completely, removing the short hair that was left on when the elder cut his hair on the previous day. Having shaved him completely, she poured the *kĩnandũ* gourd of castor oil over his head, so that it ran down his neck, chest, and back. The warrior, all the while he was being shaved, chanted the *kaarĩ* song (see Chapter 11), which everyone who had killed a Maasai had to sing. Those joints that had been roasted were then eaten by the whole family, and the other meat was put to boil, and when cooked was tasted by the father, but was not eaten by the family until next day.

While the warrior was being shaved, several council elders had fastened one or two red feathers of the plantain eater to a *mũthĩgi*, one of the long black staves which was an elders insignia of office. This was then handed to the warrior, and for the next month he carried this everywhere with him while he was going about from one village to another performing *ina kaarĩ* (singing and dancing the *kaarĩ*).

To complete the *guraria* ceremony, the man's father gave him three or four goats and sheep, which were his to keep. This was called *kũmũgwatia mbũri ya mũnyaka* (to give him an animal for good luck).

Kũina Kaarĩ

After each warrior who had killed a Maasai on a raid had been purified as described above, the warriors who had thus qualified to sing and dance the *kaarĩ* (*ina kaarĩ*) banded themselves together into twos and threes in order to go through this ceremony, which was really a means of obtaining wealth to make up for the risk taken and the good done for the community.

As we have already seen, as soon as a Kikuyu warrior had killed a Maasai warrior, he was supposed to take no further part in the fighting, but leave the field of battle and make his way behind the fighting line. Then, when the raided stock was divided among the members of the raiding party, each warrior who had killed an enemy received a larger share than the other members of the rank and file. But this was not considered an adequate reward, so, as further reward, everybody who had killed an enemy was allowed to *ina kaarĩ* for a month or six weeks, so as to further enrich himself. There was a great military motive behind this, for by making the reward for killing a

Maasai warrior a great one, the warriors were given every encouragement not only to go raiding, but to kill the enemy.

p.1059
When setting out to *ina kaarĩ*, a warrior wore a soft, tanned leather garment (*nguo ya maribĩ*), like those worn by a novice after initiation, and like them, he had to abstain from all contact with the female sex. The warrior was not allowed to carry any weapon but his sword, and he had a leather bag slung over his shoulder. He could not use any red ochre or other decorative mixture, but he wore all his normal ornaments, including *hang'i* (earrings of beads on wire), and *njingiri* (little bells or rattles), the latter on both ankles.

When two or more warriors had joined together for the purpose of *ina kaarĩ*, they set out first of all to the homestead of one of their father's brothers', for custom dictated that a warrior had to *ina kaarĩ* before a full uncle on the father's side before visiting any other relatives.

At the homestead of the uncle the warriors stopped outside the entrance near the granaries, and they sang the *kaarĩ* song, the man whose uncle they were visiting singing first and the others after him. When the women in the village heard the *kaarĩ* song, the senior woman present came out with castor oil which she had brewed for this purpose (knowing that her nephew would come sooner or later), and anointed the heads of all the warriors who were singing, starting with her nephew. Then she led them into the courtyard, where the uncle came out to meet them and presented his nephew with a fat ram, while the woman fetched a bed board for them to sit on, for they might on no account sit on stools.

The warriors sat down on the boards while the members of the homestead slaughtered the ram for them, and all the while that this was going on, the warriors went on singing *kaarĩ* songs. When the animal's heart was pierced to draw its blood the uncle stood ready with a half-gourd to catch it, and he took this to his nephew to drink hot, but he might only drink a part of it between intervals of singing the following song:

Mũndũ nĩagoocage ithe,	Let a man praise his father,
Na mũgendi wa ithe ũrĩ ngumo.	And his father's brother who is famous.
Nĩngũnyua thakame ya mbũri.	I will drink the blood of goats and sheep.
Ndanoragwo nĩ thakame ya itimũ.	I have been killed by the blood of a spear.

He handed the gourd with what was left of the blood back to his uncle, for it was to be used in making black puddings. Next his uncle cut the skin from the breast of the ram into a rawhide strip, which he put on the right middle finger of the warrior.

p.1060
Meanwhile, some of the meat joints were being roasted, while those usually boiled had been taken into the senior wife's hut. When the breast was roasted, the uncle took it in both hands, went to his nephew, and said to him, "*Wanyu wathiomo*" (special greeting, see glossary) to which the nephew replied, "*Wanyu wathiomo*," then the uncle said "*Wanyu wakinĩ*" (see glossary), and the nephew replied with the same words. Then the uncle put the joint to his nephew's lips, who took a bite, and then another, but this was not reciprocal, as the uncle might not eat anything from the joint.

The nephew handed the joint to his uncle, who cut from it the upper part of the sternum (*kabuutu*), which the warrior put in his leather bag. The nephew then shared what was left of the breast with his companions. They were next given the following roasted bits to eat: a half-saddle joint (*ikengeto*), a foreleg (*guoko*), and the first chamber of the stomach (*ihu rĩa maĩ*).

When the boiled joints were cooked, they were brought out on a *gĩtarũrũ* tray. The four feet, which had been boiled, were divided among the warriors, and they put them into their leather bags. The warrior for whom the ram had been killed put the boiled lungs into his bag. These things, with the *kabuutu* already mentioned, were used in asking and answering riddles between those who had just killed a Maasai and were now performing *kaarĩ*, and those who had done so on former occasions.

The soup from the boiled joints was brought out in the pot in which it had been cooked and set down in front of the warriors. They drank it, together with any warrior who had ever killed a man, and all the women ululated as hard as they could. No one who had not at some point killed an enemy might share this soup, and while it was being drunk, those who were *ina kaarĩ* sang the following words:

O-ũ-ũ T'oni, Baba!	*O-ũ-ũ!* Just look, my Father!
Thaathi nĩũhorio narua!	Let the tonic soup be cooled quickly!
Njĩrĩga thakame ya irua.	It is only recently that I saw the blood of circumcision.
Mũngĩrĩa na kĩendano,	You should eat with love,
Mũũĩ ĩrutagwo kũ nĩ arũme.	Because you know where the men get it (the meat).
Maitũ njugĩrĩria!	Mother, ululate for me!
Njugĩra rũraya!	Give a prolonged ululation!
Ndoigĩirũo mbu	The alarm cry was given because of me
Nĩ mũka Mũũkabi,	By the Maasai wife,
Magĩtua nyeki	When they were cutting grass
Ya njaũ.	For the calves. (p.1061)
Gatete aanyuagĩra	The *gatete* gourd from which he used to drink
Kaanaikio na rũthuĩ rũa njaũ.	Has been thrown into the calves' enclosure.
Nyina nĩetagĩrĩra.	His mother waits.
Aanaringa rũengo	He has crossed the barrier
Na arũme	With the men.

After the warriors had consumed the soup, the uncle brought out two or three live sheep and goats, which he presented to his nephew, who drove them home to his own village and slept that night in the men's hut.

Next day he and his companions visited the uncle of another of their number, where the same procedure was followed, only this time it was a different warrior who was the principal. They continued like this until they had visited all those relations who were at all likely to give them anything. Sometimes all they were given was a fat ram to be killed and eaten, at other times they got no animal for slaughter, but the principal participant was given a goat, kid, or lamb. Sometimes they visited three or four different ridges in a day, and performed *ina kaarĩ* at several homes, and on other days, if a ram was killed for them and they feasted, they might spend the whole day at one homestead.

During this period they might sleep only in men's huts, they might have no contact with women and girls, other than having food brought for them to the men's hut, and they might not sit during all this time on homestead stools.

Gũita Kaarĩ

At length, the day came when these warriors were requested by their parents to perform the ceremony of *gũita kaarĩ* (to put off the *kaarĩ*). This had to be after the passage of at least one moon, and before the passing of a second. Usually a man performed *ina kaarĩ* for about six weeks.

The warrior had been warned by his father that on the day following the ceremony of *gũita kaarĩ* he would have to go, in accordance custom, to one of his uncles on his father's side to receive a ceremonial gift, so he did not include this uncle among those whom he visited to *ita kaarĩ*, he did not go off performing *ina kaarĩ*, but spent the day at home.

In preparation for this day of putting off the *kaarĩ*, a warrior's father brewed quantities of sugar-cane beer, taking great care that the (p.1062) number of bundles of cane was a multiple of four, and also that the juice was put to ferment in an even number of *ndua* brewing gourds. The warrior's father also invited friends and relatives to brew and contribute beer for the important feast which would take place on this day. Similarly, the warrior's mother and all his female relative prepared quantities of food for this day, and especially gruel and the vegetable dish *irio*.

The warrior's father, in addition, prepared two small *ndua* gourds of honey beer. These would be required in a special ceremony to admit the man to the fellowship of the *ngakaan*, that is, of those who had killed an enemy. All the food and beer contributed for the feast was brought on the evening before the ceremony and stored in the huts of the warrior's family, so as to appear to be all supplied by the man's own family.

In the early morning of the day of the ceremony of *gũita kaarĩ*, the warrior, his father and mother, and another elder and his wife, assembled in the hut where the beer was being brewed, and using a horn and a gourd cup, the father drew beer from a *ndua* gourd and performed the usual ceremony of offering it to the ancestral spirits. The ceremony on this morning varied, however, in the respect that the father and his wife had their son and another man and woman present at the time. Further, after beer had been poured out for the ancestral spirits, and after the father and mother had drunk from the horn and the cup respectively, and had blessed themselves by spitting on their chests, they handed a hornful to the warrior, who, even if he was not of an age to drink beer normally, had to do so, and to bless himself. Then the man and his wife who had come to assist in the ceremony had to do likewise.

After this, all the friends, relatives, and neighbours came to the homestead to witness the ceremony and share in the feast. First, the warrior sat down on a bed board in front of his mother's hut, and with a razor she shaved off all the hair on his head which had grown during the period of *ina kaarĩ*. This she did in full view of everybody who was assembled, so that all might know that he had performed *ita kaarĩ*.

While the shaving was in process, the senior elder who had given the warrior his staff to carry was busy untying the red feathers attached to it. The warrior's leather bag that he had carried round his shoulders, and all his rawhide strips, were put down nearby with the feathers and the staff. Then, when the shaving had been completed, and the feathers had been untied, the warrior's father brought out the two *ndua* of honey beer with the *mĩratina* fermenting loofahs still in them. One (p.1063) *ndua* was taken by the elder who had provided the warrior with the staff, and who was now spoken of as *ithe*, his father. (This elder had to be a man who was himself a *ngakaarĩ*, a man who had killed an enemy). He sat down opposite the warrior, and lowered his head five times until his lips touched the mouth of the *ndua* gourd, and thus took five drinks of the ceremonial honey beer. Then the warrior who took admitted as a member of the *ngakaarĩ* did likewise, but only four times so that the total was nine. This done, all the other *ngakaarĩ* members present, drank in a like manner from this *ndua*, replenishing it from the second one so that it needn't be tipped.

The remaining honey beer in these *ndua* was used first to fill a *gĩtete* bottle gourd for the elder who was in charge, and the rest was poured into *kĩnya* gourds and taken into the hut to be given later to the *ngakaarĩ*.

Then the warrior stood up while his own father performed the ceremony of *gũtũngia ira*, that is, he rubbed white *ira* powder on his son's nose, throat, navel, and the tips of both big toes (in some cases only the nose was anointed on this occasion). His friends had mixed red ochre on a stool with fat from the *ya Kũgurarĩria* ram, slaughtered earlier. The warrior took this behind his mother's hut, where he removed his *nguo ya maribĩ*, anointed his whole body and head with red ochre, and put on a calfskin cloak, which had been rubbed with *thĩrĩga* to colour it.

Meanwhile, the elder who was his spiritual father cleansed the warrior's leather bag by spitting beer over it and rubbing it with mũkeũ leaves. Once the warrior had come back clothed in the normal attire of a warrior and with his body covered with red ochre, all of the materials for the feast, the beer and food, were brought out in order that the warrior himself might *gwatania* (distribute it to the appropriate groups). This had to be done in a special order, which varied slightly in different areas, but which was usually as follows:

1. First, the warrior took beer in *kĩnya* gourds to the elders of his own family (*athuri a mũhĩrĩga* or *athuri a nyũmba*), and as he did so, his mother served them food and gruel, as she did each of the other groups to which he brought beer.

2. The warrior next took beer to the *athuuri ɑ kĩama* (elders of the council), who had come to the feast to drink the *mũrora* (beer set aside especially for them), which was theirs by right.

3. Then he took beer to his *riika*. In this case *riika* did not refer to the warriors of his own initiation age-group, but to all the elders who happened to belong to his own generation *riika*.

p.1064

4. Next to receive beer were the *ngakaarĩ* (men of any age who had in the past killed an enemy).

5. Then the warrior took beer to the women of his family, that is, *atumia ɑ nyũmba*, who included all his female relatives old enough to drink beer, on both his mother's and his father's side.

6. Last to receive beer were the women who were mere guests and not relatives.

7. Having thus apportioned the beer, he took gruel and food to the warriors of his own regiment age-group who did not drink beer.

8. Then he took gruel and food to all the *airĩtu* (initiated girls and younger married women).

9. Finally, he took food and gruel to the children who were assembled.

The honey beer left over after the ceremony of initiating the warrior into full membership of the *ngakaari*, was to be drunk only by the elders who were members of the *ngakaarĩ*, and it was actually given to the warrior's spiritual father, who had given him the *mũthĩgi* staff, and who then divided it among the other elders qualified to consume it.

After splitting at the eye all of the rawhide strips which had been put on his finger during his days of *ina kaarĩ*, and which he had kept in his leather bag, the warrior threw them, together with the hair shaved off his head, somewhere where no one would find them. The red plantain feathers were put away in a gourd and kept until someone else in the village had to *ina kaarĩ*, and the

mũthĩgi staff was taken to the warrior's father's hut and kept there. The feet, lungs, and other joints which had been put into the leather bag from time to time as already described, and used in connection with asking riddles, had all been eaten after being kept for only one day.

When the feast was over everyone departed, and for this night, too, the warrior had to sleep in the men's hut, and might not go near any girl.

Early next morning, when it was barely light, his father sent him to his uncle, who knew he was coming, and who had to give him one ram or goat, *ya kũmũringĩria* (to take him across). He hurried back home with this and took a small ram to a medicine-man with whom he had made arrangements. This man took the warrior outside the entrance to the homestead, and there started to carry out the final purification ceremony, *kũmũtahĩkia* (to cleanse him ceremonially).

The warrior and the medicine-man were accompanied by a few council elders, who killed the young ram by suffocation, and cut it up. (p.1065) Taking the undigested stomach contents, the omasum, and one of the animal's feet, the medicine-man went down to the nearest stream accompanied by the warrior who was to be purified. Near the stream he dug a small hole in the ground and lined it with green banana leaves, into which he poured water from the stream, some magic powders, and some of the undigested stomach contents of the ram. The medicinc-man then went off and collected one leafy stem of 11 of the following plants, according to what was available: *mũkenia*, *mũtei*, *coco*, *mũkengeria*, *mũhoroha*, *mũcingiri*, *mũgwata-ng'ondu*, *mũkeũ*, *muutĩ*, *mũcatha*, *mũthakwa*, *terere inagu*, *rũmũrĩ*, *ũrutĩ*, or *mũtaa*. He also brought with him roots of the *ihũrũra* vine. Taking his 11 leafy stems, he divided them into two bundles, one of five twigs, and the other of six. To the one of five twigs he would later add the foot of the ram, so that each bundle would have six components. These two bundles were firmly tied with *ihũrũra* root, and were ready for use. From the omasum (the third chamber of the stomach), the medicine-man made four *ngwaro* strips, which he put on to the warrior's right-hand middle finger, his left-hand middle finger, and the second toe of each foot. This done, all was ready for the real *ndahĩkania* (purification) ceremony.

The warrior squatted on one side of the improvised basin, and the medicine-man faced him across it. Holding the omasum and foot of the ram in separate hands, the medicine-man dipped them into the basin, proffering one and then the other to the "patient", saying as he did so, "*Tahĩka ũndũ wa gĩkuũ*" (Vomit up the affair of death). Having done this, he removed the *ngwaro* from the right-hand middle finger of the warrior, and then repeated the ceremony, this time saying, "*Tahĩka ũndũ wa thakame*" (Vomit up the affair of blood), after which he removed the strip from the warrior's left-hand middle finger. Then again, saying, "*Tahĩka ũndũ wa macumo*" (Vomit up the affair of plunder taken from a dead or dying person), he removed the strip from the right-hand toe, and finally, saying, "*Tahĩka ũndũ wa kĩrumi*" (Vomit up the affair of a dying curse), he took the strip off the left-hand toe.

Next, the medicine-man dipped the woody end of the bundles of twigs, putting the ram's foot with the bunch of five, and repeating all the adjurations already used, adding others such as, "*Tahĩka ũndũ wa mũtino*" (Vomit up the affair of bad luck), and "*Tahĩka ũndũ wothe ungĩkũrigica*" (Vomit up everything that could entangle you). Then the "patient" had to turn round, sit with his back to the improvised basin, and this time he was *tahĩkio* (cleansed) with the leafy ends of the bundles of twigs.

This done, he was told to stand up, and the medicine-man dipped the leaves into the basin, and starting from behind the man's head, (p.1066) he brought the leaves down to the man's feet twice

running, at the same time saying, "I pull down (*inamia*) any evils that have fixed upon you through your killing the Maasai". This he did twice, and after dipping the leaves again into the basin, he started from the feet and drew the leaves up to the warrior's head, saying, "*Ndagũtiira na mwago*" (I prop you up with splendour.) The warrior then turned about, and the medicine-man again "pulled down" any evil, and supported the good in the man. The warrior then washed himself all over in the water in the basin, while the medicine-man threw away the *ngwaro* strips, the ram's foot, and the omasum.

When the warrior had washed thoroughly and dried himself with leaves, he was made to "step over" the basin. The medicine-man then dipped his thumb into *ira* powder in the palm of his hand and told the warrior to lick off a little of it, after which he rubbed *ira* on to the warrior's nose, throat, navel, both hands, and his big toes. This done, he gave the warrior some of each of the magic powders *rũthuko*, *mũcanja-mũka*, *kĩnoria*, and *ng'ondu*, to lick and swallow. This completed the ceremony as far as the warrior was concerned, who now went up to where the elders had been cutting up the animal and roasting the joints.

The medicine-man made a hole in the bottom of the basin and picked up the banana leaves so that all the water might drain away. He then trampled *ira* into the hole.

After finishing his part, the medicine-man joined the elders and received his share of the meat, as well as the skin, which was his fee for the service he had just rendered. After this the warrior might resume his normal life, including restricted intercourse (*nguĩko*) with his girl lovers, and, if he was married, intercourse with his wife.

Once a warrior had become a member of the *ngakaarĩ* (those who have killed an enemy), he never again had to go through such a complex ceremony when he killed an enemy. In fact, all that was necessary in the future when he killed another Maasai was to have his hair cut in public by the elders on the dancing field (but this did not involve any further fees), and to have his head shaved by his mother and anointed with oil. He then proceeded to sing and dance the *kaarĩ* (*ina kaarĩ*), after having had the *mbũri ya ngurarĩrio*, but he had no *mũthĩgi* staff with red plantain feathers on it this time, and carried his spear instead, for everyone knew that he was a *ngakaarĩ*, and he might not *ina kaarĩ* and demand presents of all his friends on the second or any later occasion, but only of very close relatives.

When the time came for the *ita kaarĩ*, there was a modified feast for close friends with only beer, and no food, but there was, as before, (p.1067) the ceremony of drinking honey beer from the *ndua ya mũrũngũ* (big gourd of ceremonial beer) with those who were also *ngakaarĩ* members. He also had to be *tahĩkio* (cleansed) as already described, before resuming normal life.

Differences in the Ina Kaarĩ Ceremony for those who belonged to the Ũkabi Guild

Those Kikuyu who had been initiated by the Ũkabi guild rites also performed *ina kaarĩ* after killing a Maasai for the first time, but unlike those initiated by Kikuyu guild rites, they did not have to sleep a night in the banana grove. As soon as they arrived home they went straight to their own fathers' homestead, and there, that same day, filed round and round the courtyard jumping up and down and shouting songs of triumph (*rũũhia*), to the sound of the *ngemi* ululations of the women.

If an Ũkabi guild warrior later killed another enemy, he did not have all his hair shaved or cut off, but his mother simply symbolically cut a little off by each ear, by the forehead, and on the nape of the neck. He did not perform any ceremony of *ina kaarĩ* or *ita kaarĩ*.

Circumstances in which the Ina Kaarĩ was Forbidden

No Kikuyu warrior was entitled to *ina kaarĩ* unless he had killed a Maasai warrior or a boy old enough to fight, for a Kikuyu could not "blood his spear" on a Maasai woman, girl, or child. Aside from this basic rule, certain things connected with the circumstances of the death might prevent a warrior from *ina kaarĩ.*

1. If the spear that was used went through the body of the Maasai and the point showed on the other side.

2. If the enemy's blood spurted over or on to the Kikuyu warrior's head.

3. If the man killed fell forward on his face, that is, if he was killed by a blow from behind.

4. If the warrior had killed his enemy by an arrow, or, in fact, by any weapon other than a sword or spear.

In any of the above cases the slayer merely washed in a river and did not count as though he had killed an enemy at all; and no honour or wealth were earned by what he had done.

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Prisoners and their Treatment

From time to time, when engaged in raids into Maasai country, a Kikuyu raiding party would attack a Maasai village, and if they did so, they always killed the men, the older women, and the boys, but carried off as prisoners the girls and younger women.

It was absolutely taboo for any warrior to rape, seduce, or in any way have sexual contact with such girls and women during the raid or during the journey back to Kikuyu country, and any warrior who did so would be severely reprimanded by the others for jeopardising the raid. Moreover, once a man had brought a Maasai girl or woman back to his parents' home as his prisoner, he had to behave towards her as towards his own sisters, and having sexual contact with her would be counted as incest, "For the girl captured is as a sister or child to the captor". The normal procedure after capturing a Maasai girl or young woman was to send messages to the Maasai with the women who went trading (see Chapter 13), asking for a ransom. If the Maasai wished to ransom the girl they could do so, and they could safely come to Kikuyu country to negotiate if they brought *mũrĩca* (tokens of peace).

If no ransom was forthcoming, the girl prisoner became a member of the Kikuyu family, and when eventually some other Kikuyu wished to marry her and she was willing, her captor would receive the marriage payments, since she was his sister (or daughter). Thus in either event the captor profited by the affair, either in the form of ransom or marriage payments, but the idea that a warrior would take his own female prisoner as wife or concubine was utterly repulsive to the Kikuyu, because by capturing her he had become her guardian. Even in this century there were still quite a few Maasai women living in Kikuyu country who were captured as girls, and who still regarded their captors as their brothers.

Duels

Sometimes when the Maasai were raiding the Kikuyu or vice versa, the armies of the two tribes would come face to face ready for a pitched battle (mbaara). In such a case it was not an uncommon thing for the proceedings to start with a duel between the champion warrior (*njamba*) (p.1069) of each side. The challenge was given by people who spoke both the Maasai and the Kikuyu languages, of whom there were always a few each side. Arrangements having been made, the two warriors met ia single combat while both sides looked on. The object of such proceedings was

usually not to settle the battle with a single duel, but rather that one or other side might gain in courage. Whichever side saw its champion killed in the duel lost heart and was quickly routed by the other side, often in a great massacre, and therefore each side fervently hoped that its champion would succeed.

Sometimes, on the other hand, the opposing armies would agree to abide by the result of the duel, and when it was over, both armies went to their respective homes, after first slaughtering an ox and carrying the dead man on its hide.

Very often such duels took place after the Kikuyu had captured a Maasai girl, or vice versa. The captors of the girl would be challenged to produce a warrior to fight her Maasai lover for her. If the Maasai was beaten, the girl and the raided cattle would go to the Kikuyu without any immediate attempt on the part of the Maasai to recover them, though they would certainly try to recover them later. If the Maasai warrior won the duel the Kikuyu had to hand back the prisoner and the raided cattle, and try to make another raid later.

Ita cia Guamba (*Minor Raids*)

Apart from the large organised raids into Maasai country that we have described, it was a common thing for small bands of warriors to go into Maasai country from time to time on what were known as *ita cia guamba*. These small, private raiding parties seldom consisted of more than 20 or 30 warriors from one, or at most two, villages. Such raiding parties were always led by one or two of the elder warriors who knew their way about Maasai country and knew the landmarks and the water holes as far afield as Narok and Magadi.

Before setting out on these minor raids, it was customary for the for the Kikuyu to consult a medicine-man in the same way as they would for a much bigger and more organised raid, and if the omens were declared to be unfavourable, they would not set out. Whenever possible, too, members of a minor raiding party would make a point getting a *mũthigani* (scout) to accompany them, so as to have the benefit of his magic outfit (*gĩthitũ*).

The usual time for these small raids was when the Maasai were (p.1070) living and herding their stock a very long way from the Kikuyu boundary, and were therefore not much on the look out for raids. During the dry season, it was by no means uncommon for raiders to find Maasai by the side of Lake Naivasha, and by the waters of the Narok River. A skilful Kikuyu raiding party at such times could achieve a great deal.

Every man in the Kikuyu raiding party would set off carrying a fairly heavy load of food, in addition to his weapons, and they would often march for anything from four to seven days before getting into an area occupied by the Maasai. Having located Maasai habitations, the raiding party would hide while one or two of the senior, experienced men spied out the land. At such distances from the Kikuyu border the Maasai usually considered themselves fairly safe, and the herds were sent out with only one or two warriors and some boys, while the majority of the warriors spent this time of year either meat feasting or taking some active part in the initiation ceremonies of new warriors.

Having spied out the land, it took only a little care to make sure that no man or boy with the herd escaped, and if this was done, the Kikuyu could often get away with a big Maasai herd without the fact being discovered for 10 or 12 hours. If the herdsmen were attacked early in the morning and all killed, the fact was not likely to be discovered until they failed to return that night. Then, with

darkness setting in, the Kikuyu would get another 12 hours' respite, and by the time the pursuit could start they would have had 20 or more hours' start.

These minor raids were therefore very profitable if luck was good and if the leaders were sound and careful, but of course, there was a much bigger risk of being killed, because if such a small party of Kikuyu was discovered four or more days' march into Maasai territory they had no chance whatever of coming out of it alive.

If such a raiding party was lucky, they were sometimes able to locate a small band of 12 or more Maasai warriors having a meat feast, and if they chose the right moment, they could usually wipe them out, owing to their superior numbers, with only a little loss to their own band, and without being discovered. This was a good thing, and gave many warriors a chance to *ina kaarĩ*, and so become rich in that way. Usually, too, Maasai warriors took girls with them to their meat feasts, and these girls could be captured and held for ransom. A warrior who, in attacking a Maasai meat feast, seized a girl prisoner, was forbidden to kill any of the Maasai present, for the captured girl was as his sister, and if he killed any of the Maasai he might well kill his sister's lover, and this was taboo.

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Maasai Raids into Kikuyu Country

The hilly nature of Kikuyu country, the fact that its population was a large, settled agricultural population, and the practice of having fortified villages all round their border, made it hazardous for the Maasai to make raids into Kikuyu country by day. For this reason, it was a well established custom for the Maasai, when they wished to raid the Kikuyu, to do so by night, and the Maasai themselves admit that this was the case. It was only occasionally, when the Maasai had reason to believe that the Kikuyu armies were weak, that a daylight raid was made.

The Maasai strategy was to send spies to find out which villages—fortified or otherwise—had really big herds of cattle. Having got the information, they would come to the borders of Kikuyu country by day, and wait until dusk before attacking. If it was a fortified village, which it would be if it was near the border, they could succeed only if they found one of the secret entrances, but if the village was one of those inside the line of fortified villages, it would be only slightly fortified and would be an easier target. The problem then was whether or not they could drive the cattle clear of the border before the Kikuyu overtook them.

When a Kikuyu village was attacked, the women and children made for the bush behind the homesteads and hid there while the warriors withstood the attack as long as possible so as to delay the Maasai. Meanwhile, the war alarm was being sounded across the hills, and the Kikuyu in other villages were on the alert. If they could hold out no longer, the warriors in the attacked village gave up and dashed for the bush behind the homesteads, letting the Maasai get away with the cattle unhindered. Provided that they had delayed the Maasai long enough, this was a safe thing to do, for it was a recognised rule that when the war alarm was sounded, the warriors in other villages would not go to rescue the village being attacked, but would go with all haste to the border, and lie in wait all along the tracks leading from Kikuyu country to Maasai country. If the Kikuyu warriors did not get there quickly, the Maasai might escape without very severe personal losses, but there was still the chance that they would not be able to get away with the cattle they had captured.

On the other hand, the Kikuyu defenders at the attacked village might harry the Maasai so much that they made it impossible for them to make a quick escape, and thus delayed them until daylight. If the Maasai were still in Kikuyu territory when dawn broke, there was little hope for them.

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The most successful Maasai raids on the Kikuyu were made during times of food shortage, when the Kikuyu warrior bands were scattered over the country and disorganised, and when they were not well fed, and therefore not in good fighting trim.

After a famine period was over, too, and the rains had at last brought a good crop, the Maasai would make daring raids into Kikuyu country for sweet potatoes and maize, because the drought had also affected them and their cattle, and stock took longer to get back to normal than did crops.

From time to time the Kikuyu made peace with the Maasai at the request of the latter. For instance, when the rains had failed in Maasai country and there was very little milk and blood available, the Maasai would decide that they wanted to be able to trade more freely with the Kikuyu than usual, and so get food for their children. Peace negotiations were therefore started, and were carried out in the way described in Chapter 13 (Trade and Travel). When such peace treaties were made, they sometimes lasted for several years before they were abandoned and fighting started once more.

Akamba Raids into Kikuyu Country

Although the Kikuyu seldom went raiding into Kamba country, Akamba warriors not infrequently used to make raids into the Kikuyu borderland areas in search of women and girls whom they could sell as slaves to the Arab traders. They knew that Kikuyu women and girls often went in large parties to the forest areas to get firewood, and the Akamba therefore would lie in wait for them.

Usually the Kikuyu would send a party of warriors with a band of women and girls going for firewood, but at the same time, this rule was not always observed, and the Akamba always stood a good chance of finding a few women whom they could carry off. If the Akamba managed to capture a party of women and girls they usually got a long start, because the women would not be missed until nightfall. In spite of this, the Kikuyu warriors not infrequently managed to overtake the raiders and rescue the prisoners, owing to their spy system, which gave them a very good idea of where the Akamba would try to hide on their way back to their own country.

The South Kikuyu had little reason to raid the Akamba, for Akamba cattle and stock seldom survived when brought back to Kikuyu country, and were therefore not worth the risk and trouble involved. The Akamba, too, were a people with whom the Kikuyu liked to have (p.1073) fairly open relations, because they were able to bring much trade in the way of cotton cloth, brass, copper, and beads, which they in their turn obtained from the Arabs.

Inter-clan Feuds

Fighting between the various territorial units in Kikuyu country was not uncommon, the chief causes being disputes over land boundaries and over cattle or sheep. If two adjoining estate owners had a dispute over the exact position of their boundaries they would likely call upon the warriors of their family, plus those of the tenants, to go and fight the opposing family. Such fighting was watched by the elders of both sides, and in the end the dispute nearly always had to be settled by the *kĩama* council, force having failed. This did not, however, deter the warriors from fighting, for they liked fighting and it was good practice.

There was, however, no honour in killing a Kikuyu of another family or clan, and far from claiming to have done so, any warrior who killed a Kikuyu in such fights would keep the fact as secret as possible, so as to avoid having to pay blood money.

These inter-clan fights did not cause any real ill-feeling, for after a few weeks the warriors of the two areas that had been at war would be dancing together, feasting together, and perhaps uniting for a raid on the Maasai.

When fighting among themselves, Kikuyu warriors usually put on all their war paint and war ornaments so that they could be recognised by friends who were watching the fight. Nearly every warrior had some distinctive ornament which made him distinguishable, such as the shape or colour of the *muunge* (long white colobus fur streamers) attached to his *riba* (feather cape) or the collar of his *rerai* (cloth poncho).

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Chapter 25 – Religion

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Introduction

Kikuyu religious beliefs and practices were so inextricably interwoven with the social organisation of the tribe and the life of each family that they cannot be completely isolated and considered by themselves. Consequently, in each chapter in Volume II (Chapters 14—22) of this study, accounts have been given of religious and semi-religious ceremonies connected with the *rites de passage* in each individual's life.

In the present chapter unnecessary repetition will be avoided, but some reiteration will be essential if we are to obtain a picture of the religious life of the people in its entirety.

Kikuyu religion was such an essential part of social organisation, and was so necessary to the maintenance of family life, that in the days that we are dealing with—before European influence really made itself felt—a Kikuyu who did not believe in the Kikuyu religion did not really count as a Kikuyu at all, while a member of another tribe who came to wholeheartedly accept Kikuyu religious beliefs (which frequently happened in the case of captured Maasai) was counted as a Kikuyu no matter what his parentage might have been.

Religion to the Kikuyu was not an individual matter; it was not something to be accepted or rejected at will, but was, rather, a family matter, and through the family, a tribal concern.

If any member of a family rejected the religion of the tribe and family, he did not thereby affect only his own life, but he very seriously interfered with the life of his family, for many of the family religious rites were not complete unless all members of the family participated in them. Therefore, if any member of a family deliberately disbelieved and renounced the religion of his people, the only way to avoid serious disturbance to the life of the rest of the family was to disown and disinherit the disbeliever, and so make the family once more an undivided unit.

For the purposes of this chapter, we will consider Kikuyu religious beliefs and practices under three headings: The Supreme God, Departed Spirits, and Animistic Beliefs.

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The Supreme God

Belief in a supreme, supernatural being who controlled everything in the world and who had power and control over departed human spirits and over the spirits of disease and pestilence was the first essential in Kikuyu religion.

The supreme being made the world, created mankind, created all animal and other life, and was in sole control of the powers of probation in all life. Without Him no child could be born, no plant would bear fruit. Death was in His power, and although other agencies could cause death, they could do so only with His consent. The Kikuyu conception of the supreme being was not, indeed, dissimilar from that of other peoples.

Names for God

The name by which the supreme being was most commonly referred to among the Kikuyu was Ngai. This word was probably not the original word used by the Kikuyu, but was one adopted from the neighbouring Maasai, who also called God Ngai. In addition to the adoption of the Maasai word, it is probable that certain Maasai concepts of the deity were also borrowed, especially those that connected the deity with the sun, and those that implied that God was at once both a single personality and a dual one.

A second name for the deity was Mũrungu, a word having the same stem, as one in a great many other Bantu languages, and it is highly probable that Mũrungu was the original Kikuyu word for the deity. The word Mũrungu has the personal prefix "*mũ*", which connotes humanity, and it implies more or less definitely that the deity was anthropomorphic, a view that is more than confirmed when we consider aspects of the worship of the deity.

A third name that was very commonly used in addressing the supreme being in prayer was Mwene-hinya. This means literally, The Owner of Power, and might be translated as "The Almighty". Linked with the name Mwene-hinya is the name Mwene-nyaga. The word *nyaga* in this context was commonly translated by Europeans as "ostrich", and I have to admit that I have in the past been guilty of this mistake. But careful study shows that *nyaga* here is a word meaning "brightness", (p.1076) "sparkle", "dazzlingness',' and, moreover, *nyaga* with this meaning is tonally quite distinct from the other word *nyaga* which does mean ostrich. Mwene-nyaga as a name for the deity means "The Dazzling One", and the name is closely linked with the Kikuyu name for snow-capped Mount Kenya, Kĩrĩ-nyaga, which, as we shall see presently, was regarded as the chief seat and dwelling place of God.

Yet another name used in addressing the deity long before the coming of European missionaries is the word Baba, meaning Father. Although my first impression was that the conception of the deity as the Father was due to Christian influence, discussion with very senior elders has satisfied me that the deity was commonly addressed as Baba long before the first European entered the country.

The Form of the Deity

God to the Kikuyu was not a person of flesh, blood, and bones, and yet He was of human form and had many human attributes. He could be spoken to, and He could speak to people. He appreciated

sacrifices of meat, blood, fat, beer, and vegetable produce. The rain was His urine, lightning His flashing sword, thunder His voice lifted up in anger, but although He had human form, the deity also had other forms.

"There is only one God and yet there are two", said the Kikuyu. "He is one God, but nevertheless there is Ngai Mũirũ (The Dazzling God) and Ngai Mwerũ (The White God)." Some elderly Kikuyu volunteered that the "Black" God (*mũirũ* also means black) was the sun and the White God was the moon, and here it should be noted that *mũirũ* did not really mean "black" when used in this connection. There are two Kikuyu stems "*ira*"; one means blackness and the other dazzling whiteness. The latter is also found in the noun *ira*, meaning white clay, and in the phrase *kũira maitho* (to be dazzled), as when one looks at something very bright and shiny. But although there were these two manifestations of God, the sun and the moon, they were both one and the same God. Nevertheless, though one and the same being, they were regarded by some of my elderly Kikuyu informants as being man and wife: divisible, yet indivisible.

A curious fact having a bearing on the Kikuyu conception of God concerns the colobus monkey. When living in troops in the forest this monkey was simply an animal, called *nguyo*, to be shot for the sake of its long black and white fur, but if a solitary colobus left the forests and made its appearance in the trees surrounding a village, it was taken to (p.1077) be a child of God, or *mwana wa Ngai*, and it could not be killed or in any way hurt. When such a solitary colobus appeared as a messenger from God, a ram was at once taken to the nearest sacred tree and sacrificed. The fact that a solitary colobus monkey was regarded as a "child of God" and a messenger from God did not, however, mean that God was thought of as a monkey. Such an idea was strongly denied, and it was simply stated that God had put his child temporarily into the form of a colobus monkey in order to send a special message.

Attributes of the Deity

According to the Kikuyu, the chief attribute of God was *tha* (pity and mercy), and He was always prepared to help mankind if He was asked to do so, and if He was not displeased because of some serious offence. The deity did not normally send punishment and tribulation upon men and women unless He was greatly angered. Moreover, He was always willing to call a halt to any punishment sent, if repentance was shown and sacrifices were made to prove the sincerity of the people.

Dwelling Places of the Deity

According to Kikuyu beliefs, the supreme being, Ngai, had many abodes. He lived "in the sky" (*igũrũ*), and he lived on earth as well. On earth his chief dwelling places were the four mountains that surround Kikuyu country to the north, south, east, and west. The first of these is Mount Kenya, called by the Kikuyu Kĩrĩ-nyaga, or Kĩrĩ-maara. The first name means the (mountain of) brightness, and the second, the (mountain of) spotted colouring. Both names were in reference to the snow cap and glaciers on the peaks.

At certain times the reflection of the sun off the glaciers is of dazzling brightness, and the contrast between the black walls of rock which separate the glaciers and snowfields gives the top of the mountain a curious black and white blotched effect, which was the reason for the name Maara. Mount Kenya was regarded as the chief home of God on earth, and in all prayers to the deity the worshippers faced first towards this mountain, as we shall see.

The second mountain was Donyo Sabuk (Kĩa-njahĩ). The name means the (mountain of) *njahĩ* beans, and the reason for this name is that a (p.1078) special variety of wild *njahĩ* beans, known

either as *njahĩ cia Ngai* or *njahĩ cia ngoma* (the *njahĩ* beans of God or the *njahĩ* beans of the departed spirits), grew in great profusion on its lower slopes. This mountain was the deity's second chief abode on earth, and this was "where he grew his crops" according to some informants, while others denied that he ever grew crops. Having prayed to God in Mount Kenya, the Kikuyu always prayed to him next in the second mountain.

The third chief dwelling place of the deity on earth was the Kinangop Peak of the Aberdare Range (Nya-ndarũa or Thimbara). The prefix; "*nya*" in the first of these two names is a female prefix found commonly in women's names, and the stem of the word is the plural word for an oxhide. Why the mountain should have been called by this name is obscure. The second name, Thimbara, is due to the fact that on the eastern slopes of the mountain there is an almost perpetual mist and cloud cover, and that the forests on it are always dripping. The suffix "*ara*" denotes "to be in a state of", and the words mean "to be in a state of *thimba*". This word *thimba* is a rarely used Kikuyu word meaning mist, and *gũthimba* means to be gloomy.

The fourth mountain used by God as one of his dwelling places on earth was that known to the Kikuyu as Kĩambĩ-rũirũ. This means "the very black mountain", and is due to the fact that the mountain range—the Ngong hills—always has a dark appearance.

Besides dwelling in each of these four mountains, the deity was believed to reside in every sacred tree dedicated as a place for worship of the deity. These sacred trees and the way in which they were selected and dedicated will be discussed in a separate section, but it is interesting to note that the Kikuyu conception of the deity was one that provided for God's presence in a vast number of different places at once. He was all-pervading, He was everywhere, and yet He had His special abodes as well.

Worship of the Supreme God at Sacred Trees

The commonest places for sacrifices to God were at special, dedicated sacred trees (*mĩtĩ ya Ngai*). There were two different types of sacred tree. One was the place of worship of the family, together with all those who were attached to the family as tenants on their land. This was a kind of family or village church, and any act of worship there had to be led by the senior male representative of the family. The other type of sacred tree was the one selected by the elders of the ruling generation of each (p.1079) territorial unit as a place of worship for the whole of that territory. These territorial places of worship were visited and ceremonies held there when there was some matter affecting the whole population of the territory to be laid before the deity for his consideration. At the territorial places of worship those who officiated were the leaders of the ruling generation of elders.

Sacred Trees of the Territory (*Rũgongo*)

A sacred tree for a place of worship for the whole territorial unit always had to be a *mũgumo* (wild fig tree—*Ficus natalensis* or *F. thonningii*). Moreover, unlike the sacred tree chosen by the members of a family, it was used only so long as the man who had chosen it was a representative of the ruling generation. Once an *ituĩka* ceremony had been performed and a new generation had taken control, their representatives had to choose a new tree to be the place of worship for their territory during their term of office (about 30 to 35 years). Having dedicated a new tree, they had to arrange with the elders of the preceding generation to uproot the former sacred tree and perform one last sacrifice there as they did so (see the section on sacrifices).

In selecting a sacred tree for the whole territory, the advice of a seer had to be followed. The elders would first search the territory for several possible trees, and cut sticks representing these different

trees. These sticks and a fat ram were taken to a well known seer (*mũragũri*—one who divines) to ask him to discover by divination which of the trees represented by these sticks was the most propitious one. Sometimes, after consulting his divining gourd, the seer would report that none of the trees selected as possibles were of any use, and the elders would have to look for other trees. More often, however, one of the possible trees was pointed out as propitious, and that one was then dedicated and became the place of worship for the territory as a whole, so long as that generation remained in power.

Sacred Trees of the Sub-clan (*Mbarĩ*)

Two principal types of tree were selected as places of worship for the sub-clan, both species of wild fig tree, the *mũgumo* and the *mũkũyũ* (*Ficus capensis* or *F. sycamorus*). Of these the former was the most favoured at the time with which we are concerned, and if trees of both species were available, a *mũgumo* was always selected rather than a *mũkũyũ* (p.1080) (though at the same time there is some reason to believe that original the *mũkũyũ* may have been the chief sacrificial tree). It must be noted that by no means was every *mũgumo* or *mũkũyũ* a sacred tree, nor did a tree once dedicated, remain a sacred tree for all time.

Any *mũgumo* or *mũkũyĩi* tree that had been selected as a sacred of worship was sacrosanct, and no person could cut down or break any branch of the tree, nor could anyone cut down or clear the bush round it. Anybody who desecrated it or its environment in any way was heavily fined, and a sacrifice of purification had to be made.

Care had to be taken in selecting a tree for dedication as a sacred place of worship. If a *mũgumo* tree was to be selected, preference was always given to one that was a parasite on another tree. The *mũgumo* species of fig was very commonly parasitic, so this was not difficult. If a parasitic *mũgumo* was not available, one that had been planted as a cutting was considered satisfactory, but a self-sown *mũgumo* on the ground might on no account be used. In fact, if the Kikuyu ever found a self-sown young *mũgumo* growing on their land, it was at once up. rooted. This involved the sacrifice of a ram and the sprinkling of its stomach contents in the place where the offending seedling had stood. Then a good tree such as a *mũkenia* or a *mũthakwa* was carefully transplanted from somewhere else to take its place. If a *mũkuyu* was selected, on the other hand, it had to be a self-sown tree.

When a man bought a piece of land and moved to his new estate, he waited until he had settled down on the land and then called together some of his male adult relatives of the status of elders, and they selected a sacred tree to dedicate as a place of worship.

The tree selected was never a big, well grown tree, but was always, in the case of a *mũgumo*, a small parasitic plant or a young tree growing from a cutting, or, in the case of a *mũkũyũ*, a small seedling five or six ft high. The tree having been chosen, a dedication ceremony took place, which will be described in the section dealing with sacrifices.

A sacred place of worship thus selected by the owner of a piece of land was "his sacred tree" and no one else could sacrifice there in the owner's lifetime unless the ceremony was conducted by himself. After his death, when the estate became sub-clan land, the senior heirs were responsible for all ceremonies of sacrifice and worship at the tree, and in their absence sacrifices could not be performed there. The person who was the trustee (*mũramati*) of the estate appointed by the other members of the sub-clan officiated at such ceremonies on behalf of the family sub-clan.

Ceremonies that concerned the sub-clan as a whole were always performed at the family place of worship, and the families of all those (p.1081) who were attached to the sub-clan owning the land, that is, tenants and relative-in-law resident on the estate, would all join in the ceremonies

Places of Worship for Individual Families

When a single family unit, that is to say, a man, his wife or wives, children, and immediate dependants such as inherited widows and their children, had need to perform a sacrifice to the supreme deity, such a ceremony might not be performed at the sacred place of worship of the sub-clan, even if the family concerned was that of the *mũramati* or trustee of the sub-clan. Instead, such a ceremony had to be performed either in the courtyard of the homestead concerned, or else at the foot of a tree or bush of one of the following species: *mũthakwa* (*Vernonia auriculifera*), *mũkenia* (*Lantana trifolia*), or *mũkeũ* (*Dombeya* spp.). If the ceremony was to be at the foot of a tree or shrub of one of these species, the tree or shrub chosen was not one that had been specially dedicated beforehand, nor need it be a tree or shrub previously used for a similar ceremony. In fact, rarely would a man perform such a ceremony or sacrifice at a tree or shrub previously used by him for a similar sacrifice, although there was no absolute rule that he might not do so. Normally such a tree was neglected and forgotten.

The fact that sacrifices and prayers to God might take place elsewhere than at the dedicated places of worship is yet a further proof that, although the Kikuyu believed that the deity had special dwelling places on earth, His presence was nevertheless everywhere, and the locus of the ceremony was not so important as was the actual sacrifice and prayers. Only in special circumstances (as when a *mũthakwa* tree had been used for a sacrifice and ceremony of removing the impurity from a girl who had had a menstrual period before initiation) was a family sacred tree protected from being cut down or damaged after being used in connection with any religious ceremony.

Priests

Among the Kikuyu there were no priests in the ordinary sense of the word, that is to say, there were no individuals ordained and set apart to conduct the sacrifices and ceremonies to the supreme deity. At the same time, we find that the right to conduct religious ceremonies and (p.1082) sacrifices at sacred places of worship was restricted to certain individuals who were qualified to officiate, while others assisted.

As far as the sacrifices and ceremonies of the sub-clan were concerned, they had to be conducted by the appointed head of the sub-clan, who need not necessarily be the eldest by birth, but was the one who had been selected by all the others as their leader, the trustee of their estate. Normally, the head of the sub-clan did not conduct a sacrifice or other religious ceremony on behalf of the sub-clan he represented unless the deputy head was present to assist him. But if the deputy head was away and the need was urgent, he might still perform the sacrifice at the sub-clan sacred tree, and he could call upon some other member of the family to take the place of the deputy head. If the trustee was absent no sacrifice could be performed at the sub-clan's sacred tree, and if the need for the sacrifice was so urgent that it could not be postponed until his return, the locus would have to be changed and the sacrifice made at a tree of the *mũthakwa* species as though it was simply the ceremony of a private family, and it was conducted by the deputy head of the sub-clan.

Whenever the head of a sub-clan conducted ceremonies on behalf of the sub-clan at the sacred tree, he had to call in to assist him, not only the deputy head of the family, but also at least one, and usually two, senior representatives of the tenants and other people living on the land who were

not members of the family. Ordinarily, all ceremonies and sacrifices on behalf of the sub-clan were conducted by the sub- clan's head assisted by two or three elders.

Any other elders, both members of the sub-clan and members of the tenant families, became the "congregation" at the ceremony. No man who was not already a first grade elder could be present at a sacrifice to the deity at a sacred place of worship, and the younger and junior elders were allowed to be present only on the outskirts so that they might gradually become acquainted with the ceremonies and in time take their places as the senior men died off.

No woman, no unmarried adult of either sex, and no child was ever in any circumstances allowed to be present at a sacrifice at the sacred tree of the sub-clan.

The medicine-man (*mũndũ mũgo*) of the district took his place by virtue of his status as an elder, and if by any chance a medicine-man was also the duly appointed head of his sub-clan, he might also officiate, but no medicine-man ever conducted a religious ceremony by virtue of the fact that he was a medicine-man. On the other hand, in connection with certain sacrifices and ceremonies, as we have already seen, and as we shall see again, a medicine-man might be called in to perform (p.1083) certain magical rites as a part of the ceremony and sacrifice, but not to conduct the ceremony itself.

In connection with the sacrifices and ceremonies conducted at the sacred tree of the ruling generation on behalf of the population of a territorial unit as a whole, the "priests" were not necessarily the same people on each occasion, but they were specially selected when each occasion for a territorial sacrifice arose.

When circumstances such as a severe drought arose which called for a sacrifice by the representatives of the territory as a whole, the elders who first decided that such a ceremony and sacrifice was necessary, sent messengers to all parts of the territorial unit asking that delegates from each village should meet them on a given day at a given central point to discuss urgent business. When all the delegates had assembled, the representatives of the village that had convened the meeting stood up and stated their business, saying that they considered that the circumstances demanded a territorial sacrifice. After some discussion it was either agreed that this was the case, or that it was not.

If it was agreed, the delegates made plans. They arranged that the representatives from the east and west ends of the territory should each provide a sacrificial ram, one to be slaughtered at the approaching ceremony of prayer, and one to be sacrificed at a later date in thanksgiving when the prayer had been answered. Those who were to provide the ram for the sacrifice were told that they had to send it on a given day, with four of their senior elders belonging to the generation in power, to a homestead specially selected. Four senior elders from the other half of the territory (that would later provide the animal for the thanksgiving ceremony) were also to come to the same homestead on the day appointed. The delegates were told to warn all elders in their villages that a territorial sacrifice would be performed on the day following that appointed for these eight men to meet, and all the other elders would have to go and wait near the sacred tree. The homestead chosen for the eight senior elders to meet in, had to be one where the head of the family, his senior wife, and his first-born son were all alive and present. A homestead not fulfilling these conditions was not suitable for the performance of the preliminaries to the sacrifice.

Such a homestead having been chosen, and the eight delegates having been told to come on the day before the actual sacrifice (four of them bringing a sacrificial ram with them), the owner of

the homestead was warned to prepare honey beer on that day, so that it might be used next day in connection with the ceremony.

The eight senior elders chosen in this way each had to be of a different initiation age-group, and they had, of course, to be members (p.1084) of the ruling generation. They had to represent the eight most senior initiation age-groups in the generation that was in power. They, with the man at whose homestead the beer was brewed, would be the "priests" for the ceremony and sacrifice for which they were thus chosen, and the senior member of the nine would be the chief conductor of the sacrifice, assisted by the other eight men. Everyone else who attended would do so merely as "congregation".

For the ceremony of thanksgiving at a later date, only four elders instead of nine, would act as officiating "priests". Two of these would be chosen from the previous nine, and two from among those who did not officiate in the first instance.

In selecting the elders to officiate at a territorial sacrifice, care had to be taken that all of those officiating belonged to one of the following three main clans: the *Aceera*, the *Ambũi*, or the *Agacikũ*. No members of any of the other six clans might be chosen to officiate at a territorial sacrifice. The eight elders who were selected to officiate, together with the man at whose home the honey beer for the sacrifice was brewed, had all to sleep in the same homestead on the night before the sacrifice, and they all had to abstain from sexual intercourse from the day they were chosen until several weeks after the sacrifice was over. They all participated on the morning of the actual sacrifice in the ceremony of pouring off (*kerũra*) the sacred beer from the gourds in which it had been brewed, into those in which it was to be carried to the sacrifice.

In connection with sacrifices to the deity for single families, the head of the family had to officiate, but if the family was one belonging to a man whose father was alive, then he had to call in his father to officiate for him and could not do so himself. In fact, by Kikuyu custom, no man whose father was living could ever in any circumstances act as a "priest" in ceremonies connected with a sacrifice to the supreme God. To do so would have been tantamount to willing his father dead, as it would be an attempt to supercede him in his duties as head of the family.

Sacrifices on a Territorial Basis at the Sacred Tree

As we have already seen, sacrifices on a territorial basis were conducted by the members of the ruling generation, who appointed special priests for each occasion as it arose. The first occasion for sacrifice when a new generation took over was for the dedication of the new place of worship. (p.1085) This had to be done before the tree used by the preceding generation was uprooted.

Dedication of a Sacred Tree

After the tree had been selected in the way already described, the leaders of the generation that was then in power arranged for a levy of honey from every village in the territory. Every village had to contribute a hornful of raw honey, which was put into a number of honey drums (*ihembe*) and taken to one central homestead near the selected tree. The leaders also arranged that the two halves of the territory should each contribute one fat ram to the dedication sacrifices.

The homestead chosen for the honey to be taken to, had to be one where the head of the family was an eldest son, and whose senior wife and eldest son were both alive.

When the honey had been taken to the man's village he was told to brew it into honey beer on a given day, and on that day eight senior elders—each representing a different initiation age-group

of the ruling generation—were detailed to assist in preparing the beer. One of the two rams that had been provided was also sent to that homestead, and it had to spend the night tied to the bedpost of the senior wife, in whose hut the beer was brewing. Next morning these eight elders assisted the owner of the homestead in pouring off the beer; the first to be poured off was put into a *gĩtete* (small bottle gourd), and the second into a *mũcema* (large bottle gourd). The two vessels were then taken to the sacred tree, in the vicinity of which representative elders of all the territory had assembled. The ram was also taken to the tree, together with a small cooking pot for rendering down fat, a horn, and a gourd drinking vessel.

Having arrived at the tree, all the assembled elders drew close to the tree to form a congregation, and the elder at whose home the beer had been brewed, together with the other eight who were officiating, then proceeded to conduct the dedication ceremony.

First of all the horn and the gourd drinking cup were filled with the honey beer from the *gĩtete* bottle gourd, and these two vessels were held by two of the "priests", while the others held on to their garments so as be associated with them. The senior priest then lifted up his voice to the deity and prayed to the effect that the elders of the new generation that had taken control of the land had come to dedicate this new tree as the place where they would pray to God and sacrifice to Him during their term of office. They had brought him honey beer, and this they now wished to present. The prayer was repeated four times in the (p.1086) direction of the four sacred mountains, the nine priests turning facing each of these mountains as the prayer was said.

Then the two elders who had been holding the two drinking vessels aloft jerked them upwards so as to throw part of the contents into the air. At the same time they said, "*Ngai, iyũkia njohi*" (God, receive your beer). A little beer was left at the bottom of cach vessel, and this was solemnly poured out at the foot of the tree on four sides. Then the nine priests took the live ram which had been standing near, and two of them held it with its front legs in the air facing Mount Kenya, while the other priests held on to their clothing, and again the deity was prayed to, first in this mountain and then in each, of the other three of his dwelling places. The deity was informed that this ram was a sacrifice and offering in order that He might make this tree one of His dwelling places where sacrifices could be offered to Him, and He was asked to give His blessing to the choice of this tree, and make the new generation who had taken control of the land strong and powerful, and their term of office a satisfactory one.

The ram was then slaughtered by suffocation, after which it was pierced to the heart, so that its blood flowed forth, and the first blood was caught in the gourd drinking vessel (*ndahi*), and the remainder in a *kiuga* half-gourd. The blood caught in the *ndahi* was offered to the deity with prayers, the priests as before facing each mountain in turn as the prayers were repeated. Then the blood contained in the vessel was thrown upwards to the sky.

The ram was skinned, its meat cut up, and the *gĩthũri kĩerũ* (fat breast) was laid on one side raw, while the *gĩthũri kĩirũ* (inner lean breast) was set to roast on the roasting platform that had been prepared. All the fat from the tail and stomach was put into the cooking pot to be rendered down at once. Meanwhile, the rest of the joints were being put on the roasting platform. When all the fat had been rendered down it was poured off into the *kiuga* half-gourd, and this was held aloft by the senior priest while the other priests held on to his arms and garments to associate themselves with him. The senior priest then offered this fat to the deity in each of the four mountains in turn, after which bunches of *kĩgombe* grass were dipped into the liquid fat and splashed four times skywards. The remainder of the fat in the half-gourd was poured out at the tree on four sides. Then the senior

priest took the cooked lean breast and this was likewise held aloft and offered to the deity, after which the priests, and only they, ate it without cutting it at all with a knife, but pulling off lumps as they passed it round. Then they took the fat that was clinging to the side of the half-gourd and each of the priests anointed his neck with some of this. While the meat was roasting, the (p.1087) priests drank most, but not all, of the beer in the *gĩtete* bottle gourd, and all the other assembled representative elders drank the beer brought in the *mũcema* gourd.

By now the meat was all cooked and all the elders, both priests and congregation, ate the sacrificial meat, taking care to break no bones, nor to throw any bones away. When the meat had all been consumed, the sticks of the roasting platform, the ram's stomach contents, and the leaves on which the raw meat was placed were all laid in a little pile at the foot of the tree, and the last drop of beer left over specially in the *gĩtete* bottle gourd was poured over them.

This done, the priests took the fat breast which was still raw, and one of them held this aloft while the others held on to his garments, and a final prayer was said. In this prayer, addressed to God in the sacred tree—which had now become his dwelling place—the deity was asked to bless the new generation, to give rain to the land, fertility to the women, health to all the people, strength to the warriors, and great increase in the flocks and herds. The fat breast was then laid against the stem of the tree as a final offering to God.

This done, the priests and all the congregation retired a little distance from the tree, where the former led the latter in the litany for rain, which has been given in detail in Chapter 6. Though there may have been no drought at the time, this litany was always said at the dedication ceremony, as rain was the one thing which would always be needed. All the priests and the congregation of representatives of the whole territory then made their way to the homestead where the beer had been brewed, and there they drank the rest of the beer brewed from the honey levied from the area. This concluded the first part of the dedication ceremony.

After an interval of a few months, if the land had been prosperous and rain had fallen, they knew that the deity had accepted this new sacred tree, and then they took the second ram, which had meanwhile been kept in a fattening pen, and this was sacrificed as a thanksgiving and roasted, using the sticks from the roasting platform of the first dedication sacrifice as fuel.

The thanksgiving service at the sacred tree was made to combine with a ceremony of *kũng'ootha atumia* "to free them from any accidental ceremonial uncleanness". (This must not be confused with a quite different ceremony of *kũng'ootha atumia* which was connected with the sacrifices at the trees of the different divisions of the territory; see below). At this ceremony the skin of the thanksgiving sacrificial animal was rubbed all over with magic powders by a medicine-man who had been called in, and it was then cut up into sections, one for each village (p.1088) in the territory. The section taken by the senior elder of each village was cut up into minute fragments, one for each married woman in his village who was the wife of an elder of the ruling generation. They tied these fragments to the corners of their leather cloaks, and by so doing, these wives became associated with their husbands in their connection with the new sacred tree or place of worship of the territory.

Henceforward, if a sacrifice for the territory took place, these women would be entitled on the day following the sacrifice to take offerings of grain and garden produce to the tree as their offering to the deity.

Cutting Down the Sacred Tree of the Retired Generation

Once the new generation of elders in each territorial unit had dedicated a new place of worship in the manner described above, they had to take steps to cut down the tree used by their predecessors, for if it was left standing, it would *nyua kĩĩruru*, that is to say, it would sap the spirit (literally, drink the shadow) of the new tree and cause it to die. The uprooting ceremony was a solemn one, but was not actually a sacrifice to the deity, for as the tree was the place of worship of the preceding generation, the new generation could not sacrifice at it.

The leading elders of the new generation fixed a day for representatives of all the villages in the territory to attend, and on the day before they ordered honey beer to be brewed at a village near the tree, and a fat sacrificial ram was brought there that day so that it could spend the night in the hut where the honey beer was being brewed. All the elders next morning repaired to the tree, and the leader of the new generation then started digging up the tree by the roots, using pieces of *mũthakwa* wood to do so. When they had thus set the work in process, the younger elders took up their axes and knives, clearing the earth off the roots, and cut them through. Meanwhile, the senior elders were slaughtering the ram and preparing a roasting platform. When the tree fell to the ground, the senior elders took some of the honey beer and all the stomach contents of the ram and sprinkled these on the hole where the tree had been dug up. They then planted a small *mũthakwa* or a small *mũkenia* plant in the hole to take the place of the tree that had been felled. This done, all the elders present ate the meat and drank the beer that was left over.

This account is not very detailed, because the last time the ceremony was performed was about 1890, and at the time of this study (1939), the elders who had participated in it were either dead or too old to remember the details at all accurately.

p.1089
Once a new territorial tree had been dedicated and the tree of the preceding generation uprooted, the normal ceremonies of sacrifice took place as and when required. Sacrifices at territorial sacred trees did not take place at all frequently, as they were held only when there was some cause for the population of the territory as a whole to approach the deity together. Such occasions were: to pray for rain when a drought was threatening the whole country (see Chapter 6), to perform the ceremony of *kuohora aanake* (a ceremony to free the warriors from accidental uncleanness before they went to war—see Chapter 24), and to pray for deliverance from an epidemic disease or a cattle plague that was spreading through the whole land (see Chapter 21). In addition, there were thanksgiving sacrifices if prayers and sacrifices for rain or for deliverance from disease had been successful. These thanksgiving sacrifices were always combined with a ceremony of *kũng'ootha atumia*, as already described in connection with the thanksgiving service after dedication of the sacred tree.

Other Territorial Sacrifices and Religious Ceremonies

Sacrifices and religious ceremonies for the whole of a territorial unit were not restricted to the ceremonies at the sacred tree of the territory, but occasionally took place elsewhere, as for example the religious ceremony of *kũhĩtũkania mbũri*, performed when a calamity, such as an epidemic disease, threatened a whole territorial unit (see Chapter 21).

Sacrifices at the Sacred Trees of the Sub-clan (*Mbarĩ*)

Whereas sacrifices carried out on a territorial basis were comparatively rare, sacrifices at the sacred trees of the various sub-clans (*mbarĩ*) within each territorial unit were much more frequent.

Sacrifice for Rain. Apart from the territorial sacrifices for rain, it was common for members of the various villages to conduct prayers for rain at their sacred trees. These prayers were accompanied by a sacrifice, and the ceremony was conducted by the head of the family owning the land, assisted by the deputy head of the family and at least two men of elder status who were residents in the village but not members of the landowning family. The reason for their being called in to assist in the (p.1090) sacrifice is that the prayers were being said for the benefit of all rnembers of the village and not only for those who belonged to the landowning family, so that the tenants had to be represented. Λ11 men of elder status in the village concerned, were entitled to come and form the congregation at the sacrifice, irrespective of whether they belonged to the landowning family or not.

This sacrifice for rain on a village basis was the same as for the rain sacrifice on a territorial basis, and the sacrifice was followed by the general litany conducted by the head of the family owning the land, and was repeated by one of the non-landowning elders. The women of the village did not take offerings of corn and cereals to the sacred tree on the next day, however, as they would have after a territorial sacrifice for rain.

Sacrifice for the Ceremony of Kũng'ootha Atumia. From time to time the elders of every village would deem it necessary to carry out a ceremony of *kũng'ootha atumia*, also called *kuohora atumia* (to untie the women, that is, free them from any accidental ritual uncleanness that might become the cause of trouble). This ceremony has been described in detail in Chapter 6, since it was principally performed in connection with the planting of crops. It was, however, not restricted to planting time, as we have already seen, and in all villages it followed any thanksgiving service carried out at the sacred tree of the territory as a whole.

In connection with the ceremony of *kũng'ootha atumia* it is interesting to note that in some cases the women took matters into their own hands. If a planting season had been very bad owing to a shortage of rain, but not a drought, and if the elders showed no signs of taking action on their account, the senior wives of the men of the ruling generation would summon a women's meeting, and from this, delegates would be appointed to go through all the villages of the territory demanding small goats and sheep from the elders. Such a demand made by the delegates of a women's meeting could not be refused, and when the animals were forthcoming the women would request that the senior elders of the ruling generation of the territory meet them at a given place on a given day. Here they would hand over the goats and sheep that they had collected and tell the elders to buy fat sacrificial rams with them, saying, "Look, we have collected the wherewithal to buy fat rams. Go now, take one of them and make a territorial sacrifice for rain, and send the rest to the various villages so that our local elders may perform the ceremony of *kũng'ootha* in order that we may carry out our planting next season with the blessing of God and so have good crops and plenty of food for our children".

p.1091
Sacrifice for the Ceremony of Kũrigĩrĩria Mũrimũ. As we have already seen, when an epidemic disease was severe, one of the ways of controlling it was to perform a sacrifice at the sub-clan's sacred tree in order to pray for deliverance, and at the same time to make little magical hurdle-work doors to set up against the disease. This sacrifice and ceremony has been described in detail in Chapter 21.

Sacrifice in Connection with a Harvest. Although there was no sacrifice performed for every harvest, a thanksgiving service was performed before harvests, at intervals of about two years.

This ceremony took place at the sacred tree of the landowning sub-clan, and a representative of the tenants took part in it. The ccremony is described in Chapter 6.

Other Village Sacrifices and Religious Ceremonies

The Ceremony of Kuohora Aanake (*To Untie or Free the Warriors from Accidental Uncleanness*)

Although the normal ceremony of blessing warriors who were going raiding took place at the territorial sacred tree, sometimes a similar ceremony took place instead at a homestead. In this ease it was less of a sacrifice and more of a purification ceremony, but it was preceded by prayer and an offering of beer to the deity for a blessing on the ceremony. The details are given in Chapter 24.

Sub-clan and Village Sacrifices at a Mũthakwa, Mũkenia, or Mũkeũ Tree

Certain sacrifices were carried out on behalf of the whole population of a village which, although they were not accompanied by any prayers to God or any direct offering to Him, were probably more connected with the deity than with spirits. Such sacrifices were more in the nature of ceremonies of religious purification than anything else, and they took place at the foot of a *mũthakwa*, *mũkenia*, or *mũkeũ* tree. A ram or a ewe was used for the sacrifice, and after it had been slaughtered the stomach contents were scattered or otherwise used.

The principal occasions for such ceremonies were: 1. When crops had been battered down by very heavy rain, in which case a ram called *ya gũtiira irio* (for propping up the crops) was slaughtered (see [p.1092] Chapter 6). 2. When a solitary colobus monkey had been killed near a village. A sacrifice was necessary in this situation because outside of its natural habitat this animal was regarded as a messenger of God and the killing of it was a serious matter, though at the same time no verbal prayers to God were offered when the sacrifice was made. 3. In connection with the ceremony of *kũrigĩrĩria mũrimũ* as described in Chapter 21.4. When a herd of elephants passed through the cultivated areas at night, in which case an animal was slaughtered at a *mũthakwa* tree and the stomach contents were scattered in the tracks of the elephants in the direction from which they had come. This was called *gũtindĩka njogu* (to push (back) the elephants). This was done because it was believed that elephants that passed through a cultivated area brought drought. Therefore, since the animals themselves could not be turned back, as they had already passed, all that could be done was to turn back their influence and stop drought from following in their wake. 5. When a tortoise was found in cultivated land (see Chapter 12), as it was also believed to bring drought and thus necessitated a sacrifice.

Sacrifices to the Deity by Individual Families

In addition to worship organised on a territorial basis, and worship carried out by the various village units, every Kikuyu family household performed sacrifices to the deity from time to time as a form of family worship. Whenever a sacrifice was to be performed by the head of a family unit on behalf of the family, it was absolutely essential that every member of the family normally resident in that homestead should be present. The only permitted exception was in the case of a warrior away on military service. Apart from this, if any members of the household were away the ceremonies had to be postponed until their return, for their absence would invalidate the service and sacrifice.

The man who conducted a family service and sacrifice was always the head of that family. If, therefore, the father of a man who had his own homestead and wives and children was living, he had to be called in to conduct the ceremony. In the case of families in which the head was dead,

the person who had inherited this responsibility had to conduct the sacrifices, as he was now *in loco parentis* to all the descendants of the deceased.

Family sacrifices to the deity normally took place in the courtyard of the homestead concerned, and the majority of occasions were dictated by a seer or diviner who had been consulted because of some trouble or (p.1093) distress in the family. Apart from such specially appointed occasions, however, the two following family sacrifices took place at regular intervals in order that the deity might continue to bless the homestead.

Mbũri ya Gũita Maguta (*A Ram for Pouring Out the Fat*)

This was a sacrifice to the deity to offer blood and fat to him as a prayer for blessings, peace, and prosperity. The day for the sacrifice having been chosen, the head of the family warned all members of the homestead to be sure to spend the night at home so as to be present early in the morning.

The ram chosen for the sacrifice was tied to the bedpost of the senior wife, and the head of the family arranged with at least one council elder who lived in his village to participate in the ceremony next morning. At sunrise the head of the family brought out the ram, and all members of the family had to be present either in the huts or in the courtyard; none might go out. Similarly, all the goats and sheep that were normally resident in the homestead had to be present. The head of the family, assisted by the elder whom he had called in to help, held the ram up on its hind legs and facing Mount Kenya. Then the head of the family prayed to the deity and offered Him the sacrificial animal, facing each of the sacred mountains in turn. This done, the two elders together killed the animal by suffocation. When the head of the family had pierced the breast and the blood gushed forth, it was caught in a half-gourd, and he proceeded to offer it to the deity. This he did by facing each of the sacred mountains in turn and throwing some of the blood up into the air by jerking the half-gourd upwards. As he did so he *said*, "*Iyũkia, Ngai; nĩwe ndakũhoera mũciĩ ũyũ wakwa*". (Receive this O God; it is you to whom I pray on behalf of this my homestead).

Once the blood had been thus offered, members of the family who wanted to go out of the homestead might do so for a short time while he skinning and cutting up was in progress, but they had to return to take part in the sacrificial feast. While the skinning was taking place, some members of the family were sent to get sugar-cane and to prepare or beer making. While the joints were all roasting, the women of the homestead crushed the cane, and the juice was set to ferment in large *ndua* gourds in the hut of the senior wife. When all the members of the roasting family were back inside the courtyard, the meat which had been roasting was shared by all, but no bones might be broken, and the joints known as *rũcuthĩ* (the sacrum with the lumbar and caudal vertebrae attached) and *mũromo wa ihu* (the ventral sac of the rumen) (p.1094) were not eaten at this stage. All bones had to be piled and left with the stomach contents of the animal by the side of the roasting platform. Any meat that the family could not eat then was covered over and placed with the above mentioned joints by the side of the sacrificial fire. The fat of the ram had all been rendered down in a pot on the same fire as that on which the meat had just been roasted, and this pot was also put aside and covered over.

The meat having been eaten and the beer set to brew, all members of the family set about their normal daily tasks, and in the evening reassembled for the completion of the ceremony. First the head of the family, his senior wife, and the elder who had helped officiate in the morning, ate the two joints that had been set aside, and the others ate any meat that was left over. Then the head of the family and his senior wife, in the presence of all the family and all the stock, poured the liquid

fat from the pot in which it had been rendered down into a big half-gourd. The woman held this in both hands, and her husband dipped a bunch of Kikuyu grass into the liquid fat, and splashed fat upwards twice towards Mount Kenya, and twice towards each of the other sacred mountains in turn. As he did so he prayed again to the deity to bless the family and the flocks, to show mercy on them all, and give prosperity and peace. This done, the head of the family put some of the fat that was left over on his neck. His senior wife did likewise, and then all the other members of the family anointed themselves with the sacrificial fat and rubbed it on their clothing. Everyone then retired to bed.

Early next morning, before sunrise, the head of the family and his senior wife went to where the beer was brewing in her hut and ladled out enough beer from the first *ndua* to fill a small *gĩtete* bottle gourd. They took this, together with a drinking horn and a gourd cup, out into the courtyard. The residents of all the huts in the homestead were awakened, and had to sit in their huts (it was most important that no member of the family should be asleep), while the head of the family and his senior wife offered the beer to the deity. No one else came out into the courtyard, and these two stood first facing Mount Kenya while the man poured beer into the two drinking vessels which had been held aloft by his wife. When they were full he put down the bottle gourd and took the horn from his wife, and, facing Mount Kenya, he prayed to God to bless all the family, to accept the sacrifice that had been made to him, and to give prosperity to the homestead. Then he jerked his hand upwards and threw some of the beer to the sky in the **direction** of Mount Kenya. This done, he took the gourd drinking cup from his wife and did likewise. Then they faced each of the other mountains in turn and repeated this process.

p.1095
When they had offered beer to God in all four mountains, they filled the two drinking vessels again, and solemnly the man drank the hornful and his wife the cupful, thus sharing the beer with the deity in a ceremony of communion. When this ceremony was over the large *ndua* gourd of beer was brought out into the courtyard, and the ceremony of pouring it off into *kĩnya* gourds took place in the normal way described in Chapter 8. After this it was put back into the senior wife's hut until the sun was well up in the sky, when the beer was shared among any council elders who had come to drink it, and also all members of the family old enough for beer drinking.

The dregs (*mairĩti*) squeezed from the *mũratina* loofahs were poured out **over** the ashes of the sacrificial fire of the day before, and after this the senior wife swept up all the bones, the wood used for the roasting platform, and the leaves on which the joints were cut up, and threw them on the midden. The sacrifice was over, and normal life could be resumed.

Mbũri ya Gũthiũrũra Mũciĩ (*A Goat and Sheep for encircling the Homestead*) *and Mbũnya Gwakia Icua* (*A Goat to light a Bonfire*)

This sacrifice was a family one, but it was carried out somewhat differently than the one above. It commenced with a ceremony of *gũthiũrũra mũciĩ*, and when a day had been fixed for this ceremony all people normally resident in the homestead were warned to be present in the late afternoon of the day preceding that of the ceremony, but no non-residents were allowed to attend. When everyone was present and all the stock was in the courtyard, the head of the family selected a young virgin ewe and a young uncastrated he-goat that had not yet become sexually mature. These he put in the charge of a young boy and girl, both of whom had to have been through the second birth ceremony but might not yet have reached puberty. During this ceremony care had to be taken that all cooking pots were temporarily off the fire.

The boy took the young he-goat, the girl and the virgin ewe and they went with the head of the family to the entrance to the homestead. Then the two children led these animals round the whole homestead in a counter-clockwise direction, taking care that they were on the inside, that is, between the animals and the homestead hedge. The head of the family sat down at the entrance and watched for their return. Then he led the two animals to the hut of his senior wife, where they had to spend the night.

p.1096
Early next morning, as soon as it was light, the same two children were summoned, and, leading the same two animals, they went round the homestead in a clockwise direction and back to the entrance, where they handed the animals over to the head of the family. The ewe was then let loose and driven to the hut of the senior wife, and the young he-goat was kept in the entrance while a council elder from a neighbouring village was summoned to assist in its slaughter. When he came, he and the head of the family held the he-goat up on its hind legs facing Mount Kenya, and prayed to God in an extempore prayer to the effect that this he-goat was to be sacrificed in a ceremony of *gwakia icua*, and that the deity was asked to give his blessing to the ceremony, and to give peace and prosperity to the homestead. Then the animal was faced round to Ngong and the prayer was repeated. In this case no prayers were said in the direction of either Donyo Sabuk or of the Aberdares.

The animal was then slaughtered, and a little of the blood was allowed to gush on to the ground. The rest was caught in a half-gourd to be used for making blood puddings, but none was offered to the deity. The animal was then skinned and cut up in the usual way, and the third and fourth chambers of the stomach, together with the omentum, were laid aside raw. All the other pieces were roasted. A small piece of skin was cut from the animal's forehead to the tip of its nose about 1in. wide, and this had a hole cut in it and was put on the elder's right-hand middle finger as a *rũkwaro* (rawhide strip worn to keep off ritual pollution).

When all the meat was roasted, the head of the family first ate the breast himself, after which all members of the family shared the meat, taking care not to break the bones. These were piled with the stomach contents and with the wood of the roasting platform and left till evening.

Everybody then went about their normal duties save the head of the family and one or two of his sons. They collected dry wood from the bush and piled it in the centre of the homestead with a big log of *mũtamaiyũ*, wild olive wood. Towards evening, when the stock was coming back from pasture, all members of the family reassembled, and the head of the family lit the bonfire with embers from the hut of his senior wife. Then he put all the bones of the sacrificial animal, its stomach contents, and the wood of the roasting platform on the fire. All the family sat round it, and all the stock was brought in to stand round it, because the smoke was supposed to have a purifying effect if it had been blessed by the deity. When it had half burnt down, three three joints that had been laid aside raw in the morning were placed on (p.1097) it. These were allowed to burn as an offering to God; they were not eaten, but the smell of them rose to heaven to the deity.

During the day a certain amount of sugar-cane juice had been prepared and put to brew in the hut of the senior wife, and early next morning the same ceremony of offering beer to the deity took place as described in connection with the previous sacrifice. The only difference was that the beer was offered to God only in Mount Kenya and the Ngong Hills and not to the other two sacred mountains, and that some of it was poured on the still hot embers of the fire, to put it out.

Variations of the Ceremony of Gũthiũrũra Mũciĩ

As an alternative form of sacrifice to that described above, some men, when they wished to perform this ceremony, would call in a medicine-man to provide certain magic powders and herbs to add to the efficacy of the smoke at the time of the burnt offering. In this case the medicine-man arrived in the evening before the day fixed for the sacrifice, bringing his bag of gourds containing the magic powders (though not his divining gourd), and, of course, all the family who were normally resident in the homestead had been summoned to be present.

After the goats and sheep had come in from pasture, the head of the family selected a young male he-goat and called upon a boy and girl who had been through the second birth ceremony to come and perform the ceremony of *gũthiũrũra mũciĩ*. The boy was given the medicine-man's bag of magic powders to carry and the girl led the he-goat. The two of them went round the homestead counter-clockwise with these things, while the head of the family and the medicine-man waited for them at the entrance. When they had made the circuit, the head of the family took the he-goat to his senior wife's hut for the night and the medicine-man took his bag of magic powders to the hut of his host.

Early next morning the two children were again summoned, and again took the he-goat and the bag of magic powders round, clockwise this time. After this the medicine-man put his bag by one of the granaries, and the owner held the he-goat on its hind legs and offered prayers to the deity. In these prayers he prayed especially for a fusing upon the medicine-man, that his magic powders might prove efficacious for the purposes for which they were intended, and that the whole ceremony might have the blessing of the deity. The prayers were addressed to God only in Mount Kenya and in the Ngong Hills.

When the goat had been slaughtered and the meat cut up, the (p.1098) medicine-man stuffed into the second chamber of the stomach magic powders of the following five varieties: *mũcanjamũka*, *ũũmũ*, *rũthuko*, *ng'ondu*, and *thiari*. He rubbed these same powders all over the third chamber of the stomach, and laid them both aside.

When all the joints had been cut up, the medicine-man called for fire sticks and made a fire by drilling, to which he added the magic powders *rũthuko* and *thiari*. When the fire was ready it was used for roasting the meat—except the two pieces mentioned above—and all the family shared it, taking care not to break any bones, and making a pile of these with the stomach contents.

The sugar-cane juice was prepared for beer and set to brew, after which all the family went about their daily business, except the head of the family, who assisted the medicine-man in collecting fuel for the bonfire in the evening, and made sure the embers of the fire on which the meat was roasted did not go out. After fuel had been collected and put ready, including a log of *mũtamaiyũ* wood, the medicine-man went out to collect herbs which, when burnt, would produce a sweet smelling smoke. These were *mũtare*, *mũgumo*, *mũkũyũ*, *mũcingiri*, *makũri*, *kogoge*, *mũtei*, and *rũhũri*.

In the evening when all members of the family and the flocks were back in the homestead, the medicine-man piled the fuel over the embers of the fire which had roasted the meat earlier in the day, and he then added the herbs and the two portions of the animal which he had treated with the magic powders. The stock and the members of the family assembled round the fire to be bathed in the sweet smelling smoke, which also ascended to God with the smell of the burnt joints.

Early next morning the head of the family and his wife offered beer to the deity after waking the family, and then the remainder of the beer was brought out and poured off to be consumed later in the day by the family and any local council elders who cared to come for the *mũrora* (beer for uninvited elders).

In a third variation of this ceremony of *gũthiũrũra mũciĩ*, no medicineman was called in, and a he-goat was used instead of both a he-goat and a ewe, which the girl and boy took round together, the boy leading it and the girl holding the tail. In this case the he-goat was offered to the deity and then slaughtered next morning without being taken round in a clockwise direction, but after it was dead its stomach and intestines were carried round in a clockwise direction by the girl and boy. In other respects the ceremony was the same as the first described above.

p.1099
The Sacrifice of Ya Gũita Maguta at a Tree

It sometimes happened that when a man went to a diviner to consult him on what he should do to get a blessing for his family he was told to take all his wives, children, and dependants, and also his flocks and herds, to a tree to perform a sacrifice to God, instead of in the courtyard of his homestead. The tree at which such a sacrifice was performed was not one which had been dedicated for regular sacrifices on a territorial or sub-clan basis, but had to be a tree not normally used, and of one of three species: either a *mũgumo*, a *mũkũyũ*, or a *mũbirũ mũirũ*. It had to be a tree that had no beehives in it, and one that had not had branches cut from it.

When a man had been advised to perform such a sacrifice and had found a suitable tree, he fixed a day for the sacrifice, warned all his family and dependants to be ready, and prepared honey beer. The ram that he selected for the sacrifice had to sleep in the hut where the beer was brewing. The head of the family also made arrangements for a friend of council status to come early the next morning to help him pour off the beer, and for several others to accompany him and assist him in the sacrifice.

In the morning, as soon as it was light, he and his friend proceeded to pour off the beer, pouring some of the beer from the first large *ndua* gourd into a *gitete* bottle gourd, and the rest into a *mũcema* gourd. When all the beer had been poured off and while it was still early morning, the head of the family and his senior wife took the *gĩtete* and *mũcema* gourds of beer, a cooking pot, a half-gourd, a horn drinking vessel, and a gourd drinking vessel, and a gourd drinking vessel, and led the way to the tree chosen for the sacrifice. All the flocks followed, and among them was the ram chosen for the sacrifice. After them went all the other wives and the young men, girls, and children.

Having arrived at the tree, the first thing they did was to perform a simple dedication ceremony, as the tree was one not normally used for sacrifices to God. The head of the family and his senior wife approached the tree and filled the drinking horn and the gourd cup full of honey beer from the bottle gourd. This done, the man took the horn in his right hand and held it aloft while he prayed to God to agree to this tree as a place for the sacrifice, to bless the solemn sacrifice that was out to be made, and to accept the offering that had been brought.

This done, he jerked his hand upwards, throwing the beer to the sky. He repeated this a second time with beer in the horn, and then held the gourd drinking cup aloft in his left hand and again prayed twice to the (p.1100) deity to dedicate this tree as a place for the sacrifice. Then the horn

and gourd cup were refilled, and the man and his wife each solemnly drank from these. They then laid them at the foot of the tree, together with the bottle gourd containing what was left of the beer.

The ram was led from the flock and held up on its hind legs by the head of the family, assisted by one or two council elders whom he had called in to help. The elder called in to help pour off the beer in the morning was not among these, for he had been left in charge of the homestead while everybody was away, one of his tasks being to keep the fires in each hut burning while the family was at the sacrifice. The ram was then held up facing each of the four sacred mountains in which God dwelled, and as this was done the head of the family prayed to God to accept the sacrifice and to bless his family and his flocks. The animal was slaughtered and its blood drawn into a half-gourd, which was held aloft by the head of the family and offered to God, after which it was poured over the tree, and not thrown into the air for the deity.

When all the joints had been cut up, the white, outer breast meat (*gĩthũri kĩerũ*) was laid aside for the deity, and the fat was all put in a pot for the senior wife to render down. The rest of the meat was set to roast on a roasting platform. The fire had been brought from the hut of the senior wife, where the beer had been brewed. When all the joints were ready, the head of the family ate the lean breast from his hands, not cutting it at all with a knife, after which the rest of the meat was divided among the family without breaking any of the bones.

When the meat had been consumed, the head of the family and his wife poured the rendered down fat into the half-gourd which had been used for the blood offered to God. This was handed to one of the elders who had come to assist, while the head of the family dipped a bunch of Kikuyu grass in the liquid fat and sprayed it twice in the direction of each of the sacred mountains, at the same time praying again to the deity.

All the women, children, young men, and girls were called to stand round the fire, and the head of the family, having first anointed his own neck and face with some of the fat, sprayed the rest over them, using the bunch of grass to do so. As he did this the women all ululated and rubbed the fat that fell on them into their skins. This done, all the stomach contents of the ram, the wood used for the roasting platform, the leaves on which the meat was cut up, and the bones, were piled up at the foot of the tree, and the uncooked outer or white breast meat (*gĩthũri kĩerũ*) was laid on them. Then the beer remaining in the bottle gourd was poured over this pile and a prayer was offered to the deity to accept all the offerings and sacrifices and to hear the prayers and requests that had been made.

p.1101
The beer in the *mũcema* gourd was then drunk by the head of the family, the men who had assisted him, and his cider wives, after which the profession was formed up in the same order as it had come, and they returned to the homestead together, before separating to go about their various duties, and before the flocks were taken to pasture. The whole ceremomy and sacrifice was usually over by about 10 a.m. Later in the day some council elders from the vicinity, including those who had helped in the ceremony, drank the remaining beer at the homestead.

Occasionally this ceremony was combined with one in which a bonfire was made at the foot of the tree, on which all the bones, stomach contents, and sticks from the roasting platform were burnt as an offering, and the flocks made to pass round the fire so as to be purified by the smoke. This combination of ceremonies was, however rare.

Family Sacrifices for the Deity

Apart from these specific sacrifices to the deity by the head of an individual family, there were a great many occasions when an animal was slaughtered for a sacrifice which was not specifically a sacrifice to God, and yet at which prayers were offered to the deity. Such occasions included that on which a girl was taken to a *mũthakwa* tree in connection with her first menses, and the times when the flocks were taken to a *mũthakwa* tree with the boys who herded them, because a hare had been killed by the herd boys, for example. Many different occasions have been mentioned and described in the foregoing chapters, and the slaughter of such an animal was always accompanied by verbal prayer to the deity to bless the ceremony, but the sacrifice itself was not to the deity.

Forms of Prayer to the Deity

In the vast majority of cases the prayers offered by the Kikuyu to the deity were entirely extempore, the chief exception being the litany connected with prayers for rain and deliverance from disease, as have already been described. The chief thing that was noticeable about Kikuyu prayers was the sincerity with which they were spoken, and the simplicity and earnestness of the requests.

p.1102
Quite apart from the prayers offered on formal occasions, the Kikuyu commonly called upon the deity in times of danger or anxiety. If a man was overtaken by nightfall on the road and did not know if he would get home safely, if a man knew that he was in danger from Maasai or from wild beasts, or if he was in any tight corner, his first action was always to call out aloud to the deity to come to his assistance, and often he would accompany his prayer by tearing off an ornament, such as a necklace, and throwing this skywards as an offering. Women in distress, women frightened by thunder, or in any other trouble, would always cry out aloud to the deity.

It was a recognised thing that if a man had invoked the aid of the deity when in serious trouble or danger, and if the aid was given and he came out from the danger alive and well, he would as soon as possible offer a thanksgiving sacrifice to God, and if he was not a head of a family and could not do so himself, he would get the man who was the head of the family to offer it for him.

A man normally addressed the deity in his private prayers as *Ngai Baba* (God my Father). Women commonly prefaced their private requests to the deity with the words, "*Ngai! Ngai Mwerũ na Ngai Mũirũ, njiguĩra tha*" (God! White God and Dazzling God, have mercy upon me). *Ngai Mwerũ* was regarded in a sense as the female deity, and was addressed first by women, but at the same time they did not imply that God was dual, but rather that God had both a female and a male personality.

Ceremonial Sex Acts as Sacrifices

As we have seen again and again in this study, there were many occasions in Kikuyu life when a man and wife performed ceremonial sex acts, which were spoken of as *igongona* (sacrifices—see glossary). The nature of these sacrifices and the power to which they were offered is quite obscure, and it is probable that the original significance has been completely lost. One cannot help suspecting that it was the relic of an ancient fertility cult, but if this is the case, it is no longer known. The only explanation that the Kikuyu I spoke to put forward, was that failure to observe this "sacrifice" in those ceremonies where it was ordained by custom would result in a state of *thahu* (ceremonial impurity). Moreover, until the ceremonial sex acts had been performed there was a ban on ordinary sex acts by people who were in any way connected with those for whom the ceremonial sex act was necessary. (p. 1103) If such people did perform these acts, they then took the uncleanness on themselves. The whole conception of the meaning of these ceremonial

sex acts of sacrifice for the Kikuyu was that of a purification rite, and yet it was called a sacrifice, showing that it had in the past had a meaning and had been in the nature of an act of worship of some deity that had been superseded by Ngai.

Departed Spirits

Side by side with the worship of the supreme deity, the Kikuyu practised what is commonly called ancestor worship. Actually, it was not ancestor worship so much as a cult based upon the belief in a spirit world, and in the ability of the spirits of those who had died to exert their influence over the living.

The difference between the Kikuyu worship of departed spirits and true ancestor worship rests in the fact that when a man offered a sacrifice or a libation of beer to the departed spirits of his family, he not only offered these things to his deceased parents and grandparents, but also to deceased brothers and sisters. Even children who had predeceased their parents, and wives who had predeceased their husbands received offerings and libations, so that it was certainly not ancestor worship in the strictest sense. Before we study the curious forms of offerings and libations made to departed spirits we must briefly review the Kikuyu beliefs concerning spirits and the spirit world.

The Names of Departed Spirits

In ordinary conversation, the spirits of the deceased were referred to as *arĩa me thĩ* (those who are in the ground). This did not refer to the fact that they were dead and buried, for as we have already seen, a large proportion of those who died were never buried at all. It referred rather to the fact that according to Kikuyu belief the place to which the spirits went was in the bowels of the earth. A second name for departed spirits was *ngoma*. Occasionally spirits of the departed were referred to as *ciĩruru* (singular *kĩĩruru*—shadow), but this term was not strictly applicable to **a** departed spirit so much as to the spirit part of an individual during his or her lifetime.

p.1104

Nature and Form of Departed Spirits

According to Kikuyu belief, spirits had human form, but they were not made of flesh, blood, and bones; they were abstract bodies like shadows. In fact, spirits were identified with a person's shadow, and at death it was the shadow of a person which went to the spirit world. In the spirit world each spirit retained the age and sex it had at the time of entering the spirit world. The spirit of an elder remained an elder and never grew any older; the spirit of a child remained a child and did not grow up. Although spirits had no concrete form, or perhaps it would be more correct to say, because spirits had no concrete form, they could and did manifest themselves in concrete things, by temporarily entering them in order to reveal themselves to the living. Thus, a spirit might enter a snake's body and in that form enter the hut in the village of its relatives or a spirit might enter the form of a mongoose and come in this guise to fetch meat offerings that had been made to it, and take them to be shared with the other spirits in the spirit world. A departed spirit also could, and did at times, enter the body of a living person and speak in that person's voice to demand things. Temporary insanity, delirium, and even epileptic fits were commonly attributed to the fact that a spirit from the spirit world had taken possession of the body for a time in order to communicate with the living.

Apart from such manifestations, spirits, once they had gone to the spirit world, were quite invisible, although during a person's lifetime they were visible but not tangible, being, in fact, the persons' shadow.

The Attributes of Spirits

Whereas Ngai, the supreme deity, was merciful, the departed spirits were said to have no mercy and to be greedy and wanton. "*Arĩa me thĩ nĩ a kĩũnũhu*" (Those who are underground are uncharitable) said the Kikuyu, "*Nĩkĩo tũkayagĩra Ngai*" (That is why we plead with God). Departed spirits were always anxious to cause the death of the living in order that the living might join them in the spirit world; the living, however, wished to go on living as long as possible, so they prayed to God not to allow the spirits to fetch them away and take them to the spirit world.

Although the deity had supreme control over life and death, He (p.1105) allowed the departed spirits to have some powers in this respect; they could cause the death of their relatives unless the deity intervened to prevent it. Departed spirits were therefore much feared, and everything possible was done to placate them.

The Dwelling Place of Departed Spirits

When any person died, his or her spirit went to dwell in a "country" in the bowels of the earth. Here the spirits of each family had their own homestead, and here they had flocks and herds of goats, sheep, and cattle. These were not animals of flesh and blood, but were the shadows of that family's animals which had died, as distinct from those which had been slaughtered. For clothing, the spirits had the shadows of the garments they wore during life, and which were buried or disposed of with them. The spirit world was, in fact, a shadow world where everything was as it had been in life. Animals that were slaughtered did not survive in the spirit world, but their shadows were eaten by the departed spirits, just as the concrete part of them was eaten by the living.

The path to the spirit world was by way of a "*mũri wa mũkongoe*" (a root of the *mũkongoe* tree). This was a mythical, invisible tree, and any deep natural holes or fissures were referred to as "roots of the *mũkongoe*", and they were supposed to lead straight down to the spirit country.

Although spirits of the departed dwelled in their own country in the bowels of the earth, they were nevertheless also present (but invisible) in and around the homes they had dwelt in on earth. They could therefore always be called upon, spoken to, and prayed to in the homestead at any time of the day or night. In particular the spirits liked to frequent the hearths of the huts in the homestead, and therefore, as we shall see, libations were commonly poured out to them there.

In spite of dwelling for all eternity in the spirit world, spirits were reincarnated in their descendants. This applied only to the spirits of those who were already married, and who therefore had actual or classificatory descendants. The fact that a spirit was reincarnated did not mean that it left the spirit world, for the Kikuyu conception of a spirit was that it was at the same time one and indivisible, and yet multiple and divisible. The shadow was not divisible, but every spirit had an indefinable part that could be reincarnated in descendants. Moreover, the part of a spirit that could be and was reincarnated could be multiple, and it could be reincarnated before the body in which it (p.1106) lived had died. Thus every first-born grandson of a man had reincarnated in him a part of the spirit of his grandfather, even if his grandfather was still alive, and he therefore was his grandfather. It was definitely not the *kĩĩruru* (shadow) of the grandfather that was reincarnated in the first-born grandson, but rather an indefinable part of the personality of the grandfather. This is

a somewhat complicated conception, and the Kikuyu that I talked to had difficulty expressing it words, and yet had no doubt about the facts.

Places where Sacrifices and Offerings were made

Of the four principal types of sacrifices that were made to departed spirits, two took place in the courtyard of the homestead of the family concerned, and two took place in the bush somewhere near the homestead. The two latter had to take place at the foot of either a *mũthakwa*, *mũkeũ*, or *mũkenia* bush. Apart from actual sacrifices made specially for departed spirits, offerings of things like beer and gruel were made from time to time, and these were always poured out at the hearths of the huts in which the beer had been brewed or the gruel cooked. In addition, libations of beer to the departed spirits were poured out in the courtyard (in the centre and at the main entrance to the homestead). In the case of certain animals that were slaughtered in connection with such ceremonies as childbirth, marriage, and the building of a new hut, beer was poured out as a libation to the spirits on the place where the roasting fire had been.

Moreover, whenever animals were slaughtered for any purpose, the first gush of blood that spurted out when the knife was plunged into the breast was always allowed to fall to the ground, and it was in fact an offering to the departed spirits, although in most cases no actual word was spoken to indicate this. Since animals were slaughtered in all sorts of different places, it might be said that in a sense offerings were made to the departed spirits almost anywhere.

"*Priests*" *who Conducted the Sacrifices*

No person whose father or mother was alive might ever perform a full sacrifice to the departed spirits, for if he did so he would be willing the death of his parent or parents. If any man whose parents were alive (p.1107) wished to make a sacrifice to the departed spirits, he either had to call in his father, or if he was dead, his mother, to conduct the ceremony for him, failing that he had to perform a very modified form of sacrifice such as will be described presently. A woman whose husband was entitled to make offerings and sacrifices to the departed spirits always participated if she was the senior living wife of that husband. Junior wives did not do so, as the senior living wife acted as their representative. Women who were widows might make offerings to the departed spirits themselves on their own behalf and on behalf of their married sons.

Special Sacrifices

As we have already seen in Chapter 22, in both the Ũkabi and the Kikuyu initiation guilds the ceremonies which followed a death included one in which a sacrifice was made to the departed spirits, and offerings left at the foot of a tree or bush for the spirits to take to the next world. These particular sacrifices have already been described in full detail and need not be repeated. Similarly, in dealing with initiation ceremonies as conducted by both the guilds, we have noted that a sacrifice was made to the departed spirits in order to gũra irua (purchase the right to have a child initiated). In both these cases, the animal that was slaughtered was offered as a combined sacrifice to the ancestral spirits and to the supreme deity. The details have been given in Chapter 16.

The two other recognised sacrifices to the departed spirits were both made at irregular, but not infrequent, intervals—about once every year and a half—as special offerings to the departed spirits in order to keep them in good humour and not earn their displeasure. In addition to these spontaneous occasions, one of these sacrifices was sometimes prescribed by a diviner if sickness would not respond to herbal treatment. Not infrequently he determined that the trouble was due to

the anger of departed spirits, and told the head of the family to make one of the following sacrifices to appease them.

Mbũri ya Gũtinia Nyama Nja (*An Animal for Cutting Up the Meat in the Courtyard*). When the head of the family had chosen a day for this sacrifice, he informed all members of his family who were normally resident in the homestead, so that they would be present to share in the sacrificial feast. He also informed male relatives such as brothers, half-brothers, etc. who were living in the neighbourhood, for the spirits to whom he was going to sacrifice were the same as those to whom they sacrificed.

p.1108
Having fixed a day, he chose the animal to be slaughtered, which depended upon which animal he had slaughtered on the previous two occasions when he performed this particular sacrifice, for he had to slaughter in succession a ram, a hc-goat, a virgin ewe, and then a ram again, and so on. Furthermore, great care had to be taken that the animal chosen be either an animal that had been bought or an animal acquired by raiding, or else the offspring of such an animal. In no circumstances might an animal acquired in connection with marriage payments be used, nor any offspring of such an animal.

On the appointed day the animal chosen was put into the hut of the senior wife about midday, and then the man and his wife or wives prepared some sugar-cane for making beer. When the sugar-cane was ready for crushing he left the women to do this, and went with his senior wife to fetch the sacrificial animal from her hut.

He stood with the animal between his hut and the hut of his senior wife, and faced Mount Kenya. His senior wife stood beside him and held on to his cloak on the left-hand side so as to associate herself with him. The man then held the front legs of the sacrificial animal up so that it was standing on its hind legs, and he prayed to God in Mount Kenya. The prayer, always extempore, was nevertheless always to the same effect, and the following is a translation of one of many that I heard.

> God, since it was you that created this mountain, and made it Your dwelling place, and since it was You that created us and our fathers and forefathers, I pray to You now, when I am about to offer a sacrifice to my father and my mother and my other relatives who are in the spirit world, namely (here followed a list of the names of relatives, starting with the man's own father, and any of his father's deceased brothers and half-brothers, followed by his mother's name and the names of other deceased women, wives of his father and his father's brothers). I pray to You, God, to make these my relatives satisfied with the offering, and to prevent them from coming to my home in anger to take away my children or my stock, which I have inherited from them. This sacrifice I am offering to my relatives and not to You; I have already made offerings to You frequently; I will do so again, but this is for them- I beseech You to bless this sacrifice and to bless me and my family and all I possess; make us firm and strong like Mount Kenya, which You created.

Having prayed thus, the man turned round and solemnly led the sacrificial animal to the main entrance of the courtyard, while his wife still held his cloak. Here he again stood the sacrificial animal on its hind legs, and facing the Ngong Hills, he again prayed to the deity for a (p.1109) blessing on the sacrifice to the departed spirits. This time the prayer was more brief.

Having prayed thus twice, he led the animal to the centre of the courtyard, facing the door of the senior wife's hut, and here it was killed by suffocation and partially skinned in readiness to be pierced for its blood. The blood was caught in a big half-gourd, and the man and his senior wife took this, and standing together, the man poured out some of the blood where he had first stood when he prayed to God, this time, however, addressing the departed spirits and not the deity. He

called upon his father, his father's dead brothers and half-brothers, and their deceased wives by name, saying, "So-and-so, so-and-so, and so-and-so, receive this blood which I pour out for you and be ye willing to accept it and bless my family and my stock". Then they went across to the entrance of the homestead and again poured out some of the blood with the same prayer and requests, after which he and his wife returned to where the animal was being cut up by any other elders who had come to help. As the carcass was divided into its regular joints, a piece of meat was cut from both the left and the right hand joints, and these were laid in two separate piles on *mũthakwa* leaves, and then covered with similar leaves. Any joint of which there was only one, as for example the *rũcuthĩ* (sacrum with the lumbar and caudal vertebrae attached), had two pieces of meat cut off and one put on each of the two piles.

The joints were all put to roast, but no meat was eaten until all the flocks had returned from the pastures and all members of the family were present. Then the head of the family ate the breast, after which all the meat was divided among the family, care being taken not to break any bones. All the bones were then collected and laid in a pile between the two little piles of raw meat. The wood used for the roasting platform was divided into two equal bundles and laid on either side beyond the two little piles of meat, so that the arrangement was as follows: a pile of wooden stakes, a pile of meat covered over with leaves, a pile of bones, a second pile of bits of meat, and a second pile of wooden stakes. The stakes were said to be *itĩ* (seats) for the spirits to sit on when they came to eat their meat.

The members of the family then had their evening meal and retired to bed. When all was quiet the head of the family and his senior wife came out and uncovered the piles of meat, and again addressed the departed spirits, calling upon the senior spirits to come and eat the feast that had been prepared for them. The men called upon were specifically asked o divide their share with the unmarried male spirits (*thaka*), and the women likewise were asked to divide their meat with the *thaka* female spirits. All the spirits, male and female, were prayed to and asked (p.1110) to accept this offering and to bless the family. Then the man returned to his hut and his senior wife to her hut, for they might not sleep together or have intercourse on this night.

Early next morning, when it was just barely light, the man **came out** to see if the spirits had accepted the offering. If they had, and if the bits of meat had disappeared, having been taken away by the *ciihũ* (small carnivores, that is, spirit messengers), all was well and the man called his senior wife at once, and she collected the bones, the wood from the roasting platform, and the leaves on which the piles of meat had been laid, and deposited them out beyond the midden. Then they both went to her hut and here the husband ladled out some beer into a *gĩtete* bottle gourd, and taking this, a drinking horn, and drinking gourd cup they both went out into the courtyard.

First they stood at the place between the men's hut and the woman's hut where the blood had been poured out first, and the woman held both vessels while the man filled them both from the *gĩtete* bottle gourd. Taking the horn, the man called on all male ancestors of his father's generation, starting with his father, to accept this beer, and as he prayed he poured it on the ground. Then he took the gourd drinking cup and he prayed to his mother and the spirits of her generation. They repeated the offering at the entrance, where they had poured blood on the previous day. After this they went to the place where the sacrificial fire had been and poured out two more libations with the same prayers. Then they filled the two vessels for the fourth time, and the man took the horn and the woman the gourd cup, and they solemnly drank as a sort of communion with the spirits.

All this was done before the sun was up, and then they each went back to their respective huts to wait until some council elders came in about mid-morning to help pour off the rest of the beer. The dregs and the beer squeezed from the *mĩratina* fermenting loofahs was poured out over the place where the sacrificial fire had been, and the beer was then drunk by the man, his wives, and any elders of council status from the village who cared to come.

If the man came from his hut in the early dawn and found that the meat offering had not been taken, it was a very serious matter indeed. It meant that the offering had been rejected by the spirits, and unless another animal was slaughtered before nightfall the spirits would take the life of some member of the family. The husband called his senior wife at once, and together they carried the rejected offering to the midden, with the bones and all the wood from the platform. Then they awakened the family and announced that another sacrifice was to be performed at once. This time the animal chosen had to be a very fat (p.1111) ram, one so choice that the spirits could not possibly reject it, and if necessary such a ram had to be bought at once. This ram was not held aloft to pray to the deity but was held in the middle of the courtyard, and a brief but urgent prayer was said, asking the deity to make this very fat ram acceptable to the spirits.Then it was slaughtered straight away, and the blood was offered as on the previous day. Its meat was similarly treated and it was roasted at once and eaten before the members of the family dispersed for their day's business.

In the evening, the roasting platform, bones, and the bits of raw meat which had been guarded all day were carried out and laid down as on the previous day, but out beyond the entrance to the village instead of in the centre of the courtyard. The beer had to be offered as soon as the meat of the second animal had been eaten by the family, **and** was not kept until the following morning.

Late in the evening the meat laid out beyond the entrance was uncovered. The man and his senior wife implored the spirits not to reject this second offering, and then they retired. All the Kikuyu I talked with said that they had never known of a second offering being rejected by the spirits.

The skins of animals offered in connection with the sacrifice we have just described were always pegged out, dried, and then bartered for food. They might not be kept and used as clothing by members of the family.

Mbũri ya Gĩthaka (*A Sheep for the Bush*). The sacrifice of *mbũri ya gĩthaka* was offered either on special occasions after consultation with a diviner, or else at the discretion of the head of the family. Having decided on the performance of this particular sacrifice, the head of the family had either honey or sugar-cane beer prepared, and he warned all of his wives on no account to let the fires in their huts go out that tight, since a sacrifice of *mbũri ya gĩthaka* was to be made in the morning.

A very fat ram or a fat castrated he-goat was chosen for the sacrifice, and it was put for the night in the hut where the beer was brewing. Before he retired for the night, the head of the family arranged for a council elder of third grade status to come early in the morning to assist him in the sacrifice. If the head of the family had only one wife of his own, he requested this elder to bring his senior wife, for at the ceremony there had to be a minimum of two men and two women. If the man had many wives, he took with him the four senior ones.

Early in the morning on the day chosen for the sacrifice, the head of the family first made quite sure that no fire had gone out in any of the huts during the night, and being satisfied on this point, he and his (p.1112) senior wife offered beer to the departed spirits in the normal way connected

with all ordinary beer brewing operations (see Chapter 8). By the time this had been done, the elder who had been called in to assist had arrived, and preparations were begun.

A fire-brand of *mũtamaiyũ* wood was lit from the fire in the hut of the senior wife and given to the elder who had come to assist. Each of the man's wives (up to four) then collected grain of all the kinds that were underneath their granaries, and put these into potsherds. The man himself poured into a *gĩtete* bottle gourd some of the beer that had been brewed, fetched a slaughtering knife, and then the procession was formed. All members of the family not in the procession had to remain within the confines of the courtyard and see to it that the stock remained inside also. The assisting elder with the fire-brand had to head the procession, then came the head of the family leading the ram or he-goat and carrying the bottle gourd of beer, and then the women, each with a potsherd containing samples of grain. The procession went out into the bush until a suitable shrub of *mũthakwa*, *mũkenia*, or *mũkeũ* was located, and here they halted.

The women put down their potsherds with the offerings at a little distance from the tree, and set about collecting dry wood for fuel for the sacrifice. Meanwhile, the head of the family tethered the ram to a nearby bush, took the beer, and went to the shrub chosen for the sacrifice. Standing by it and facing Mount Kenya, he prayed to God to bless this bush chosen as a place for the sacrifice; in fact, he asked the deity to dedicate it. Then he prayed to the deity to bless the sacrifice, make it acceptable to the spirits, and to be a witness (*mũtũrũgamĩrĩre*) while the sacrifice was made. Facing the Ngong Hills he prayed likewise. He did not offer any of the beer to the deity, for the beer was for the spirits, and all he did was pray to God. This done, he turned again to the tree, addressed the spirits by name, and said to them, "We have come to this tree to make an offering to you of beer, meat, blood, grain, and skin. Be pleased, therefore, to accept this, our offering". As he said this, he poured out some of the beer at the foot of the tree.

Then he laid the gourd with the rest of the beer at the foot of the tree and fetched the live ram or he-goat. Meanwhile, the elder who had come to assist had been cutting sticks to make a roasting platform, and kindling a fire with the wood collected by the women, using the firebrand to light it. While he was doing this, the head of the family was holding the ram or he-goat on its hind legs by the side of the tree and facing first Mount Kenya and then the Ngong Hills. He again prayed to God to bless the sacrifice, make it acceptable to the spirits, and to be a witness.

p.1113
This done, he and the elder who had come to assist him suffocated the animal and skinned it, and he pierced the breast and let all the blood spurt out at the foot of the tree. None of it was caught in a half-gourd, as all was for the spirits. As the blood gushed out he called upon his father and mother and upon other deceased relatives of that generation by name, inviting them to share the blood that was offered to them. Then the men cut up the animal into all the recognised joints and set them to roast, except for the *ceacum*, which was set on one side.

When all the joints were roasted, the two men and the women ate a little from a few of the joints, so as to share in the feast with the spirits, but all the rest of the meat (in fact, almost the whole animal) was laid at the foot of the shrub. The skin was cut in two and laid on either side of the pile of roasted joints, and the wood of the roasting platform was laid nearby. The women brought their offerings of grain and laid these at the foot of the shrub. This done, the head of the family again called upon the spirits by name. Having done so, he picked up the gourd of beer that had been leaning against the stem of the tree and poured all that was left in it over the meat and the offerings

of grain, calling upon the spirits to come and feast, and upon the women in particular to fetch the grain and the skin and to make use of these in the spirit world.

The procession then formed again for the journey home, but this time the head of the family came last of all and he had in his hand the raw *ceacum*, which he laid across the track they had made coming and going from the shrub. As he did so he said to the spirits in general, "*Inyuĩ mũrĩ thĩ, nĩtwainũka; ikarai hau na mũtigacoke gũũka mũciĩ gũtwĩtia indo*" (You (spirits) who are underground, we are going home now; stay you there and don't come to the homestead again to demand things of us). This done, he overtook the others and they all went back to the homestead, where the rest of the beer that had been brewed was brought out and drunk.

Offerings other than Blood Sacrifices

In all the ordinary business of daily life, minor offerings were continually being made to the departed spirits. These offerings were, like the offerings at sacrifices, merely token gifts for the spirits, who did not want the actual material and concrete gifts, but rather, the shadows of the materials used by the living.

Thus, whenever a man made snuff from his store of dried tobacco, he offered a little of the finished snuff to the departed spirits of his father (p.1114) and mother and any others who had used snuff. This he did by throwing some on the ground, at the same time calling aloud, "*Inyuĩ aa baba arĩa mũnyuaga mbakĩ iyũkiani*". (You, my father, and those who are with him who take snuff, accept this.) By so doing he dedicated the whole of his newly made snuff to them so that they could make use of its *kĩĩruru* or shadow!

When a woman prepared gruel of any of the many varieties described·in Chapter 8, she always poured a little out on the hearth stones after it was cooked and before she dished it out to her family. As she did so, she called upon the spirits of her mother and father, her husband's mother and father, and the spirits of any deceased co-wives, to accept this offering, saying, "*Iyũkiani, mũtige kũndeng'ũrĩra nyũngũ*" (Accept this and do not take my cooking pot off the fire yourselves). By so doing she dedicated the shadow of the gruel to the deceased. Other foods were not so offered as a general rule, although a woman might, if she felt so inclined, offer a little of any cooked food to the spirits.

Whenever beer was brewed some of it was offered to the spirits in the early morning, as described in Chapter 8.

When a man made a journey into the uninhabited regions of the plains or forests, he offered a little of the food he was carrying to the spirits of deceased *athigani* (the scouts of the tribe), who were accustomed to spend their days in the outlying uninhabited areas.

When a woman who was in the habit of making earthenware cooking pots found that a number of them cracked when fired, she knew that the spirits of her mother and other women of the family who had been potters, and also the spirits of famous potters who were not related, were displeased because they had not had enough beer recently. She went at once to her husband, and together they brewed some beer and offered it to the spirits of these women next morning. If a great many pots broke while firing, not only was beer offered, but a small virgin ewe was sacrificed in the manner described under *mbũri yo· gũtinia nyama nja* (see above).

Combined Offerings to the Spirits and to God

When a blacksmith erected a new hut for his forging work, and when a smelter built a new furnace, they had always to make beer and slaughter an animal for the spirits of their ancestors who had taught them to do this work. This sacrifice was offered in the homestead, but some of the beer was also poured out on all four sides of the furnace or on the forging hearth. In this case prayers for blessing were addressed not only to the spirits, but also to the deity.

p.1115
Whenever a man erected a new kiugũ (enclosure for his cattle) he had to sacrifice a ram and ewe and make beer for a sacrifice and offering to the deity and to the spirit of his father and his paternal uncles.

If a man was preparing to go on a long journey he brewed a little in advance, and on the day before he set out he made offerings of to the departed spirits of the family and to the deity, at the same time praying for a blessing on his journey, for his safe return, and that his homestead might be peaceful and secure during his absence. The next day he set out with bottle gourds of gruel for his journey. At each stream that he crossed he poured out a little of the gruel with a prayer to the departed spirits not to interfere with him. This was emphatically not an offering to any spirits of the river or stream (belief in such spirits was not a part of Kikuyu religion), but an offering to the spirits of the next territory, for each stream crossed marked a definite stage in the journey and meant that he was entering new territory.

Whenever the Kikuyu slept a night in the bush or on the open plain, as when on a trade journey to the Maasai or on a hunting expedition, they always offered a little of the food they were about to eat. This, however, was said by some elders to be an offering to the supreme God and not to departed spirits, while others said it was to the spirits of the departed who might have died in that area.

From time to time, when the scouts of the armies went out into Maasai country to spy out the disposition of Maasai villages and flocks, they took with them a ram and sacrificed it in the plains. This was a combined sacrifice to God and to the departed spirits of former scouts, and solemn prayers for blessing were offered to both the deity and the spirits.

When members of the soda miners guild went off on a journey to Lake Magadi they always took at least one ram and one he-goat to be slaughtered in Maasai country as a combined sacrifice to the deity and to the spirits of deceased soda-miners, to accompany prayers for a safe and successful journey. Moreover, as they returned, but before they actually came back to their villages, they sent a messenger to get a ram, and this they slaughtered in the bush as an offering of thanks to God and the spirits, and each member of the party put on a rawhide strip made from the skin to show that he had duly rendered thanks to the deity and to the spirits.

hese are but a few examples of offerings and prayers to the spirits and to the deity. Special sacrifices and prayers of all kinds were innumerable, and they show the intensely religious nature of the Kikuyu people.

p.1116
Dreams

According to the Kikuyu, most dreams were manifestations of the spirit world, while a few were messages received from spirits in the form of instructions to do certain things.

Dreams in which a person took part in dances, meat feasts, sacrifices, and raids with people who were unknown to him or who were long since dead, were visions of the happenings in the spirit

world, and were the chief reason for the belief that the "shadows" or spirits in the spirit world continued to behave exactly as they had in this world.

A dream in which a person held conversations with individuals who were dead was interpreted as a communication with the spirits, who wished to send a message to the living. If a man dreamt, for instance, that he was assisting his father in slaughtering a ram or a goat, he knew that this was a message that he was to do so, and next day he slaughtered an animal and offered its blood and some of its meat to the departed spirits. Similarly, if a man dreamt about people whom he knew and who were alive, he knew that this, too, was sent to him by spirits, and was a prophetic dream.

If a man dreamt that he was having sexual intercourse with one of his wives and he woke up to find that he had had an emission of semen, he had to go at once to that wife's hut, tell her of his dream, and have intercourse with her straight away so as to fulfil the dream.

A man who had a nightmare in which he saw himself falling from a cliff, being attacked by wild animals, or in any other grave danger, went straight to the fireplace, got a live cinder, and, holding it in his hand, spat on it until he had put it out. Alternatively, he seized a firebrand and plunged it in a pot of water. By either of these actions he destroyed the nightmare and spoilt any prophetic intent it might have had.

Ghosts

The Kikuyu believed that from time to time spirits of the departed came to the surface of the earth at night to hold dances, to drive their spirit stock to the salt licks, and to visit the land. Almost all Kikuyu I spoke with would tell of how they had heard these spirits at night singing, dancing, and driving the flocks, whistling as they did so, but (p.1117) they were never seen. No one who heard ghost sounds ever dreamed of going out to investigate, and people who heard such sounds while travelling at night ran away as fast as possible.

Ghosts were particularly fond of coming at night to a *kĩbĩrĩra*, or where bodies were laid out when dead, which is one of the reasons why these places were avoided as much as possible, and especially at night.

Animistic Beliefs

The Spirits of Trees

As we have already noted in the beginning of Chapter 21, most trees and plants, together with most epidemic diseases, are grouped in Kikuyu in a noun class whose singular prefix is *mũ* and plural prefix *mĩ*, and it might be said that all nouns in this class were believed to have spirits that were potentially capable of playing an important part in men's lives.

As a result, there were certain circumstances in which it became necessary to make a sacrifice to the spirits of such inanimate objects, or to perform other ceremonies connected with the appeasement of these spirits.

Whenever the Kikuyu cleared forest land for cultivation they always left standing a number of big trees at intervals. Such a tree was called *mũrema-kĩrĩti* (one which resists the cutting of the forest), and according to the Kikuyu these trees, "*Nyua ciĩruru cia mĩtĩ ĩrĩa ĩngĩ miune, ĩgaciũngania*" (Drink the shadows, or spirits, of all the trees felled and gather them together). Hence these large trees left standing alone became the dwelling place of the spirits of all the former trees in the neighbourhood, and thus might not ordinarily be felled. If it became necessary or desirable to fell a *mũrema kĩrĩti*, one of two things had to be done.

If the tree was to be felled in order to be made use of for household objects such as building planks, stools, and mortars, the following ceremony had to be performed. The owner called in another senior council elder, and together one evening they cut a branch of some other tree, preferably a *mũthakwa* or *mũkeũ*, and they solemnly leaned this branch against the stem of the tree that was to be cut down the next day, and left it there for the night. Meanwhile, some honey beer had been brewing at the home of the owner of the tree. Next morning, (p.1118) accompanied by the same elder and one or two young men who were to fell the tree, the owner went to it carrying a gourdful of honey beer. Having arrived at the tree, he and the elder who had come with him stood at its base, and the owner addressed the tree saying, "I have come to cut you down, O tree, but I am not going to destroy the whole of the spirits which are in you. See, I have prepared a new home for them and you". Then he poured some of the beer at the foot of the tree as an offering to the tree spirits, after which the branch that had been leaning against the tree all night was solemnly carried away and placed against some other tree that was not going to be cut down. The spirits were thus *thamio* (made to move their abode).

The owner of the tree made the first axe blow and the young men cut the tree down. When it had fallen, the owner poured the rest of the beer on the stump. After this, the wood of the *mũrema kĩrĩti* could be safely used for any purpose, as the spirits that were resident in it had been given a new home.

If a *mũrema kĩrĩti* was very old and in danger of falling down in a storm, steps were taken to avert such a catastrophe, for if this happened the spirits in the tree might be very angry with the owner and *thetha* (crush) him and cause him to die. The owner therefore called in one or two other council elders and they went with a ram to perform the ceremony of giving it a new lease of life. This was done by cutting it down and planting another tree in its place.

While the tree was being felled, the ram was slaughtered nearby, and as soon as the tree had fallen the ram's stomach contents were sprinkled on the stump, on the fallen stem, and on the branches. Then a cutting of *mũkenia*, *mũthakwa*, or *mũkeũ* was solemnly planted by the side of this stump. No words were addressed directly to the tree in this case, nor to God, but rather to the invisible spirit world in general, as follows. "Since we have cut down this tree and resurrected it with this cutting, let it be peaceful, let it not kill its owner, and let its wood be used for fuel in peace".

If a *mũrema kĩrĩti* should be blown down in a storm, the owner had to perform this same ceremony the very next day. If he failed to do so, the spirits of the tree would "crush" him, and he would soon die.

The Homestead Shrine

As we have seen in Chapter 5, the courtyard of every homestead had planted in it a *mũkũngũgũ* cutting which, when it had set and taken root, was used to hang up bunches of sweet potato vines for the goats and (p.1119) sheep to eat. In addition to this tree, some families planted another, which they called *kĩhanya kĩa mũciĩ* or *kĩgongona kĩa mũciĩ*, which was in a homestead shrine, although it had nothing to do with either the worship of God or the worship of departed spirits.

The only times that sacrifices were performed at the foot of the *kĩhanya kĩa mũciĩ* were if the tree was getting too big and needed pruning, or if a branch broke off in the wind during the night. In both these circumstances a small ram or goat had to be slaughtered at the foot of the tree, and on the following morning beer had to be poured at its base.

Whatever might have been the practice in the past, within the memory of living elders in 1939 no prayers were ever offered to the tree in these circumstances, and the ceremony was a silent one, yet at the same time there was a very definite suggestion of an offering to appease the spirit of the tree.

When a homestead was moved, the owner pulled up the *kĩhanya kĩa mũciĩ* by the roots and left it lying there, but at the place where the homestead was re-erected he planted another cutting (not from the original tree, however) and this was said to *riũkia* (resurrect) the previous *kĩhanya*.

Trees and Suicides

The cutting down of a tree in which a person had committed suicide by hanging, and the killing of that tree for all time by rubbing soda into the stumps of the roots is another example of belief in the powers of the spirits of trees. Here the belief was that if such a tree was not utterly destroyed its shadow would be fatal to any who passed under it or sat under it, since it had learnt about human death and had assisted in causing such a death.

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Introduction

Like religion, magic was such an essential part of Kikuyu life that it is not really possible to divorce it from everyday life and deal with it completely in a single chapter. Moreover, the subject is so vast that a whole volume could easily be written on it.

For the purposes of this study, however, it is essential to attempt to summarise the basic principles of Kikuyu magical practices. In almost every preceding chapter, there have been references to the medicine-man or *mũndũ mũgo* (professional worker in magic), and in most chapters there have also been detailed accounts of rites and ceremonies performed by a *mũndũ mũgo*, or with his assistance. A large portion of this chapter, therefore, deals with this profession, and with those who practised it.

Definition of Mũndũ Mũgo

It is unfortunate that there is no English word or group of words which adequately describes the functions of a *mũndũ mũgo* (plural *andũ ago*). Such words as medicine-man, witch-doctor, seer, and diviner, all convey an incomplete impression of the varied specialities of *andũ ago*, and

although we have used them synonymously throughout the book, in this chapter we will use only the Kikuyu, with the intention of clarifying the diverse nature of a *mũndũ mũgo's* activities.

Taken as a whole, the *andũ ago* were of more than average mental ability. *Ũgo*, an abstract noun standing for the profession of the *mũndũ mũgo*, was something far more comprehensive than mere magic, and the profession was one that could not be entered into light-heartedly, and moreover, one at which it was by no means easy to be successful. In fact, quite a number of those who were initiated into the profession failed to make a success of it and ceased to practice. The profession, like the medical profession today, was one that had a number of specialised branches, and once a man had been initiated and had served an (p.1121) apprenticeship, he decided for himself whether to try and become a well-known specialist in one or other branch of *ũgo*, or whether he would content himself with remaining a general practitioner.

Needless to say, the vast majority of those who entered the profession, even if they aspired to become specialists, never succeeded in doing so, and remained general practitioners all their lives. Such men never attained great wealth, but the successful specialists were among the wealthiest men in the land.

We can draw a reasonable analogy between the modern medical profession in England and the *ũgo* profession of the Kikuyu. Just as every English doctor must take the same qualifying examinations before he starts specialising, so every Kikuyu *mũndũ mũgo* had to qualify as a general practitioner before he proceeded to specialise as a diviner, a herbalist, a charm maker, a dealer in preventative magic, etc. Similarly, too, those *andũ ago* who were general practitioners regularly sent their clients to specialists when they considered this necessary.

There were one or two general practitioners in each village, and every family had a particular *mũndũ mũgo* whom they consulted as we would consult a family doctor, and they only consulted specialists on the advice of this man, or for some very special matter which they knew necessitated a specialist.

Just as every European doctor, whether a general practitioner or a specialist, has certain essential things such as a stethoscope and a bag of emergency drugs and instruments, so every *mũndũ mũgo*, no matter what branch of the profession he took up, had his essential paraphernalia, to which he added whatever might be necessary for his specialised work.

It is interesting to note as a further point of comparison that every *nũndũ mũgo* was required by law to refrain from making public any personal information that he had acquired from his patient in the course of his work. In order to benefit from the services of a *mũndũ mũgo*, it was essential that every patient be absolutely frank, and confess to any misdeed he might have done that might have caused his illness or other trouble. Such information was given in absolute secrecy, and a *mũndũ mũgo* who divulged to anyone else anything he learned in this way would be liable to serious reprimand by other members of the profession, and he would be so cursed by them that he would not recover. The reason for this is that the members of the profession knew that no one would confide in them if they did divulge the secrets of their patients. The rule of secrecy did not, however, prevent one member of profession from passing on his knowledge to another member of the profession if he had called him in as a consultant in the case.

It is important to stress the fact that a *mũndũ mũgo* was always a fully (p.1122) qualified and initiated member of the profession of *ũgo*. These men were legally recognised, and their work was all done for recognised fees and for the good of individuals and the community. Everything that

the did was "beneficial magic". It is essential to differentiate them clearly from the people called *arogi* (singular, *mũrogi*), who were poisoners and dealers in witchcraft, and who were neither members of a profession, nor legally recognised. The *arogi*, in fact, when discovered, were always punished by death. Very occasionally, a qualified *mũndũ mũgo* would secretly become a *mũrogi*, but if the fact was discovered, he would not be able to claim any exemption because of the fact that he was a *mũndũ mũgo*. In fact, the other members of the profession would be the first to denounce one who was giving their profession a bad name.

The Mũndũ Mũgo Relationship to the Deity

Members of the *ũgo* profession were in a very special relationship to God, and especially to God as manifested in the sun. Most of the prayers to God which were offered by a *mũndũ mũgo* were made towards the rising sun rather than towards the four sacred mountains. God was always regarded by those in the profession as "the Owner of magic", "the Person who gave the profession his magic", or "the Person who speaks and gives messages through the medium of the *mbũgũ*".

At the same time it would be quite erroneous to deduce from this special relationship between God and the *andũ ago* that they were in the position of priests, for they did not act as mediators between the people and the deity, nor did they conduct public worship. The relationship of each and every *mũndũ mũgo* to the deity was indeed a purely private one, and was due to the fact that, "all magic comes ultimately from God".

The Mũndũ Mũgo's Relationship to Departed Spirits

The Kikuyu believed that spirits of members of the profession remained active as *andũ ago*, and followed with interest the activities of surviving members of the profession. Thus their aid was invoked in many ceremonies.

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Reasons for Entering the Profession of Ūgo

The profession of *ũgo* necessarily a hereditary one, although nearly always one son would enter his father's profession and take over his father's work when he died. On the other hand, many men entered the profession without ever having had ancestors who were practitioners. Neither was the profession of *ũgo* restricted to specific clans, although the clan of *Anjirũ* was noted for the number of its members who entered the profession.

No Kikuyu entered the profession of *ũgo* unless he had received definite indications that he had a special bent in that direction. In some cases a man first discovered these talents through dreams. If he continually dreamt of events that were going to take place, he told people of his dreams the next morning, and if enough of them came true, people in the neighbourhood urged him to become a qualified *mũndũ mũgo*, in order that he might specialise as a diviner and seer.

If a whole series of troubles fell upon a man quite unaccountably, for example, his wife or wives had still-born children or his flocks did not prosper, he went to consult a specialist in divining. The diviner might tell him that the root of all his troubles was that he was one whom the deity had chosen to be a *mũndũ mũgo*, and he would therefore never prosper until he had been initiated into the profession. After being told this, the man concerned consulted some quite different diviner in another part of the country, and if he got the same information again, he knew that he had received a call and had to take steps to become a qualified *mũndũ mũgo*.

If, when attending the slaughter or sacrifice of goats and sheep, a man continually saw omens in the entrails and stomach, and, having told those present of the signs and portents he saw, they came true, he knew that he had to become a *mũndũ mũgo*.

Also, if a man was continually afflicted with fits, and went off into trances, he knew from this that he had to be initiated as a *mũndũ mũgo*, as otherwise he would die or go mad.

Sometimes an important *mũndũ mũgo* who was a specialist took on one or two young men as assistants to carry his bag of magic powders, and generally assist him without being actually qualified to act as a *mũndũ mũgo*. Very often such assistants became so imbued with the influence of *ũgo* that they asked their master to consult other diviners to see if they should themselves be initiated.

Nearly always, too, among the sons of a *mũndũ mũgo*, one showed by (p.1124) various signs that he had inherited his father's propensity for the profession, and in that case his father would start early to train him as a specialist in some branch of the profession, and if he showed aptitude, he would have him initiated. Inheritance of the urge to enter the profession was not only through the male line, for there were many cases of men who inherited the urge to practise *ũgo* through a *mama* (maternal uncle).

Sometimes, too, a child was born clutching a *mbũgũ* (diviner's counter, here a smooth white pebble) in his fist. If this happened it was a sure sign that the deity had chosen him to be a *mũndũ mũgo*, and this smooth white pebble was carefully kept until he grew up. Then, *when* he was initiated into the profession, this pebble became one of the first objects to be put into his divining gourd.

In every case, the call to become a *mũndũ mũgo* was sent by the deity, and for this reason the relationship between a *mũndũ mũgo* and God was always a very special one, and no man could practise successfully without the aid of God.

Initiation of a Mũndũ Mũgo

No matter which way a man received the call to the profession, he had to be duly initiated before he could start to practise for fees. The ceremony of initiation of a *mũndũ mũgo* was called *gũkunũra mũgo* (to uncover the *mũgo*). Having decided to become a *mũndũ mũgo*, a man went to a qualified *mũndũ mũgo* who was a relation of his, or failing that, to some other *mũndũ mũgo* in the district, and announced that he wished to be initiated (*kunũrũo*), and that he wanted the man to conduct the ceremony and become his "professional father" and instructor. If the *mũndũ mũgo* agreed, he told the would-be initiate to get together certain essentials for the ceremony: 1. He was to find a gourd suitable to be made into a divining gourd. This had to be bottle-shaped, and about 14—18in. long, and it might have no scar or mark of any kind on its exterior. 2. He had to get together a number of small *mbũthũ* gourds, also unmarred, and these had to be about 6-10in. long and not more than 2in. wide at their widest point. 3. He was to buy some *ira* powder from those who brought it down from the foot of Mount Kenya. 4. He was to collect a certain number of pebbles of white quartz, which he either collected himself, or sent people out into Maasai country and to the district round Thika Falls to collect them for him. 5. He was to get together a large number of goat skins, which he would need for the (p.1125) payment of the recognised fees. 6. He had to get some bars of Magadi soda, also required as fees. 7. He was to procure a *karũhĩ* (young male he-goat), which had to be of a single colour and immature sexually, but well nourished. It had to be all black or all

white "without spot or blemish". 8. He was to get together a quantity of honey. 9. Finally, he was to prepare a large quantity of sugar-cane beer on the day before that chosen for his initiation.

When the candidate had done all these things, he informed the *mũdũ mũgo* whom he had chosen to conduct his initiation that he was ready to be initiated on a given day, and this man sent messages to all members of the profession who were within a radius of four or five miles, so that they might come and take part in the ceremonies.

To three of these he sent special messages asking them to arrive early in the morning at the homestead of the candidate on the appointed day, in order that they might assist in conducting the initiation. The candidate himself, once the date had been fixed, sent invitations to all people in the neighbourhood to come to his homestead to witness his initiation, and he asked all his friends and relations to assist him in providing vast quantities of gruel and other cooked foods to be eaten by the guests.

First Stage of the Initiation

On the evening before the day when the initiation was to take place, the *mũndũ mũgo* whom the candidate had chosen to conduct the ceremony arrived with his senior wife. He was carrying his own divining gourd in a string bag, and his wife was carrying a bag of magic powders.

When they reached the entrance area of the homestead they halted, and the candidate for initiation and his own senior wife went out to meet them. The candidate and his wife were told that they had to produce one very large he-goat skin and one large bar of soda as a fee in order that the divining gourd and magic powders might be brought into their home. They went back to their huts, brought these out, and handed them over, whereupon the *mũndũ mũgo* handed the candidate his divining gourd to carry for him, and his wife handed the candidate's wife the bag of magic powders. They all then entered the homestead and went to the candidate's hut, where the *mũndũ mũgo* and his wife were to sleep. Here the divining gourd and the magic powders were deposited for the night.

Sugar-cane beer prepared that day was already brewing in the hut of the candidate's senior wife, and a pot of pure honey beer was now (p.1126) mixed and set to brew at the foot end of the candidate's wife's bed. Early on the morning of the day of initiation, before it was light, *mũndũ mũgo*, his wife, and the candidate, went across from the men's hut where they had slept to the hut of the candidate's senior wife, and they took the bag of magic powders with them, but the divining gourd was left in the men's hut. The *mũndũ mũgo* hung his bag of magic powders over the bed of the candidate's wife, and then the candidate drew honey beer from the pot in which it was brewing, and filled a horn and a gourd drinking cup. He and his wife took these out into the courtyard, leaving the other two alone in the hut.

In the courtyard the candidate and his wife (following the instructions given to them) stood facing Mount Kenya as the candidate prayed to God, saying that he was going to be initiated this day, and wished the deity, who had called him to the profession of *ũgo*, to bless him, bless the whole ceremony, bless his wife and family, and make them all prosper and benefit by the profession he was about to enter.

This done, he jerked some of the beer in the drinking horn up in the air towards Mount Kenya, saying, "*Iyũkia Ngai*" (Receive this, O God). Then he repeated the prayer and jerked out some of the beer in the gourd cup in the same way. Finally, they went across to the entrance to the homestead, and here they faced the Ngong Hills and again prayed to the deity twice, making offerings from both the horn and the drinking cup.

Next they went to the centre of the courtyard, and here they prayed, not to their own family spirits, but to the spirits of all deceased *andũ ago*, saying, "*Inyuĩ ago arĩa mũrĩ thĩ, twamũhoya igongona ciagĩre*" (You *ago* who are in the ground, we ask you to allow the sacrifices to be successful) . Then they poured what was left of the beer in the horn and the drinking cup on the ground and went back to the hut. Here they refilled the horn and the gourd cup, and the candidate and his wife each spat a mouthful over their breasts to bless themselves, before solemnly drinking the remainder.

Then the gourd cup and the horn were filled again and the candidate handed them to the *mũndũ mũgo*, who took both of them and stood in front of his bag of magic powders, which was hanging over the candidate's wife's bed, and he addressed the bag and the contents thus, "Give your blessing now to this ceremony of initiation that is going to take place, and make it satisfactory, and give your consent to the initiation of this candidate, and consent that part of your contents be shared with him". As he addressed the bag and contents thus, he poured the beer from the horn and from the gourd cup into the bag and over the little gourd bottles in it so that the beer trickled through the bag on (p.1127) to the bed. When he had finished pouring the beer into the bag, he added an admonishing sentence thus, "*Na mũtikarĩyo*" (And don't you drunk). Then the candidate again refilled the horn and the gourd cup and handed these respectively to the *mũndũ mũgo* and his wife, who drank the contents, after first spitting some on their chests to bless themselves. By this time the three other *andũ ago* had arrived and were waiting in courtyard. After first filling the *ndua* pot to the brim with more honey and water, the candidate and the *mũndũ mũgo* who was conducting the ceremony went out to join them there. They took with them the he-goat of one colour which had spent the night in the hut where the beer had been brewing, and the *mũndũ mũgo* brought out his gourd of *ira* powder and his gourd of *ũũmũ* powder. The two wives stayed in the hut.

Then the candidate, leading his he-goat and escorted by the four *andũ ago*, set off in the grey light of dawn to the nearest waterfall which had a deep pool at its base. Having arrived at this pool, the candidate's garment was removed and held by one of the *andũ ago*, and the candidate was instructed to hold tightly on to his he-goat with his left hand by passing his left arm round its chest and neck, and to shut his eyes tightly. They then picked him and the he-goat up and threw them bodily into the pool. The man had been warned that when he fell in he was to grab with his right hand a handful of silt and pebbles from the bottom of the pool. When he and the goat rose to the surface they were hauled out, and the he-goat was taken by the man who had the candidate's garment. They all went up to the top of the hill above the waterfall, the candidate still holding tightly in his right hand whatever he had grabbed in the water.

At the top of the hill the man who was in charge of the ceremony poured some of his *ira* powder into his left hand, and dipped his right thumb into it repeatedly, rubbing the blobs of *ira* all over the candidate's face and body at intervals of about 4in. The *mũndũ mũgo* then put *ũũmũ* powder into his left hand, and rubbed blobs of this red powder in between the white blobs, so that the candidate's whole body was covered with red and white spots.

Thus bedecked, and still quite naked, he was escorted back to his homestead, where by this time a great crowd of men, women, and children had assembled to witness the rest of the ceremony. This crowd included a large number of *andũ ago* who had come from the neighboured. As the homestead was approached, the candidate was again given the he-goat to lead, but not his clothing, and the four *andũ ago* who were escorting him started singing the *Rũĩmbo rũa Ago* (Song of the *Andũ Ago*).

This was a signal for all the women, led by the wives of the visiting (p.1128) *andũ ago*, to come to the entrance to the homestead and stand there ululating to welcome the candidate back to his home. All the other *andũ ago*, who had arrived while the party had been at the waterfall also came out and joined the ones who were escorting the candidate, and sang with them the *Rũĩmbo rũa Ago*, which was as follows:

First Soloist:

Ũiyũ-ĩ, ũiyũyũ!	(Yodelling)
Nĩniĩ gĩthũũre. Ndathũũrirũo	It is I who was hated. I was hated
Nĩ andũ aitũ,	By my relatives,
Ngũkio na kĩano; ngiuga nĩngũthiĩ,	And cast out; so I said I would go,
Na ndũgũto ya mĩtĩ.	And a shower of sticks was thrown after me.
Hĩ-ĩ! Ndĩrĩndĩbũũ!	(Yodelling)

Chorus:

Hĩ-ĩ! Ndĩrĩndĩbũũ!	(Yodelling)
Hĩ-ĩ! Ndĩrĩndĩbũũ!	(Yodelling)

Second Soloist:

Ũiyũ-ĩ, ũiyũyũ!	(Yodelling)
Ngĩthiĩ kwenja mĩtĩ gĩthaka	So I went to dig up plants in the bush
Ya kũguna ndundu	For the benefit of the secret things
Cia gwitũ.	Of our home
Rĩu nyama iria mwanyimaga,	Now the meat that you would not give me
Rĩu ũũkĩ ũrĩa mwanyimaga,	Now the honey that you would not give me,
Mũ'heaga nĩ ũndũ	You give me because
Wa kũguna ndundu.	Of benefiting the secret things.
Hĩ-ĩ ndĩrĩndĩbũũ!	(Yodelling)

Chorus: As before

Third Soloist:

Ũiyũ-ĩ, ũiyũyũ!	(Yodelling)
Mũndũ ũrĩa ũgũthiĩ	You who go
Kũrĩma mũgũnda,	To make a new garden,
Ndũkanatũgũte mũtĩ ũrĩa	Do not cut down the plant that
Twenjaga mĩtĩ	We dig up
Ya kũguna ndundu.	To benefit the secret things
Hĩ-ĩ! Ndĩrĩndĩbũũ!	(Yodelling)

Chorus: As before

Fourth Soloist:

Ũiyũ-ĩ, ũiyũyũ!	(Yodelling)
Ndakũũrire mũtĩ,	I pulled up a plant,
Na ũrĩa warema,	And the one that defeated me, (p.1129)
Ngakũũra na kanua.	I pulled up with my mouth.
Rĩu kĩrĩa ndaimagwo,	Now what I used to be denied,
Ndanaheo, nĩ ũndũ	I have been given because
Wa kũguna andũ.	Of benefiting people.
Hĩ-ĩ! Ndĩrĩndĩbũũ!	(Yodelling)

Chorus: As before

First Soloist again:

Ũiyũ-ĩ, ũiyũyũ!	(Yodelling)
Niĩ, Wanjirũ-ĩ,	I, O Wanjiru,
Ndĩ mbũtũ ĩmwe	Am one of a group
Ĩrugaga na kĩondo	That makes preparations

Ya kũguna ndundu. To benefit the secret things.
Hĩ-ĩ! Ndĩrĩndĩbũũ! (Yodelling)

Chorus: As before

Second Soloist again:
Ũiyũ-ĩ, ũiyũyũ! (Yodelling)
Nũ ũkwĩrĩte ũkarĩme Who told you to make a garden
Gatitũ karĩa In the little forest
Twenjaga mĩtĩ, Where we dig up plants
Mũtũgũte? And cut down the bush?
Ũiyũ-ĩ, ũiyũyũ! (Yodelling)

Third Soloist again:
Ũiyũ-ĩ, ũiyũyũ! (Yodelling)
Ndererire, Wanjirũ-ĩ! I brought myself up, oh, Wanjiru!
Nduma rĩĩgu, Put me up food for a journey,
Nduma rĩĩgu mũingĩ, mũritũ, Put up a big heavy lot of it,
Amu nĩndathiĩ ngoinage mĩtĩ. For I go to break off branches.
Ũiyũ-ĩ, ũiyũyũ! (Yodelling)

Chorus: As before

Fourth Soloist again:
Ũiyũ-ĩ, ũiyũyũ! (Yodelling)
Ng'aragu nĩ kĩrimũ. Hunger is an idiot.
Ĩnyamaragia mũmaathi, That troubles the one who searches,
Na wona ngĩthiĩ, And when you see me go,
No ngũbaata mwanya, It is because I am looking for a place where I can pass,
Ngĩthiĩ gũcaria mĩtĩ. As I go to hunt for plants.
Hĩ-ĩ! Ndĩrĩndĩbũũ! (Yodelling)

Chorus: As before (p.1130)

All Together:
Maitũ, njugĩra ngemi Mother, ululate for me
Kĩrĩrĩmbĩ! Loud and long!
Ndĩgũũka na mĩrigo, I have come with loads,
Mĩingĩ, Many of them,
Kĩbĩrĩĩri, Wanyanjirũ! Very big ones, O Wanyanjirũ!
Ndĩgũũka ! I have come!
Hĩ-ĩ! Ndĩrĩndĩbũũ ! (Yodelling)

This is the Song of the *Andũ Ago* that I have heard, but I was told that there were many variations of it, as well as quite different songs used as alternatives.

As the candidate and his escort approached the entrance to the homestead, the candidate was given his garment to put on again, and the *ngemi* ululations of the women were redoubled in intensity as they made way for the party to enter the courtyard of the homestead for the second stage of the initiation ceremonies.

Second Stage

As soon as the candidate and his escort had entered the homestead courtyard again, the *mũndũ mũgo* who was conducting the ceremonies told the candidate to bring out the following things: the gourd that he had obtained to make his new divining gourd (*mwano*), a knife, an awl, and a large string bag, which the conductor of the ceremonies had first asked for on the previous evening, and had cut open to make a flat mat. The candidate brought these things from his hut, while his senior wife was sent to her hut to bring a fire-brand.

While the candidate and his escort had been away at the waterfall, one of the *andũ ago* who had arrived at the homestead in their absence had been given a message by the wife of the conductor of the ceremonies that he was to go and *hũnga mĩtĩ yα mbũgũ* (collect wood for making *mbũgũ*). He knew exacdy what this message meant and he went out and collected a stem of each of the following: *mũimba-igũrũ*, *mũthakwa*, *mũkenia*, and *mũgere*, and a root of *mũcingiri*, *kĩhĩnga*, and *kĩrago*. These bits of stem and root had all been brought in by the time the party returned from the waterfall, and they were produced with the other things mentioned above.

The conductor of the ceremonies now laid the cut-open string bag as a mat in the centre of the courtyard, and on this he placed the bits of stem and root above mentioned, the new gourd, the knife, and the awl. When the fire-brand was brought by the candidate's wife, a little fire of (p.1131) *mũtamaiyũ* wood was made by the side of the mat. When the fire was burning well, the awl was put into it to get red hot, and meanwhile the conductor of the ceremonies used the knife to cut from the *mũthakwa* stem all oval-like pebble about ½in. long. This process was called *gũkera* (chop up), and this oval would count as a *mbũgũ* to be put into the new divining gourd. He then directed the other asssisting *andũ ago* to chop similar wooden balls from each of the other six plants, making *seven* wooden *mbũgũ* in all.

While they were doing this, he took the new gourd that was to become the candidate's divining gourd, and he and the candidate sat down by the fire to prepare it for use. First of all the *mũndũ mũgo* cut off the upper third of the neck of the gourd, and having done so, he sent the candidate for the family's granite grinding stone, and using this as a file, he smoothed off the edges where he had cut the neck of the gourd. Then he drew the red hot awl from the fire and burnt a hole right through the wall of the gourd in the middle of one side. This done, he said to the candidate. "*Thiĩ ũrehe kĩũma kĩirũ*" (Go and fetch a dark blue bead). This had to be a bead that had been picked up from a pathway where someone had dropped it, and the candidate had been warned weeks before to look for such a bead and keep it in readiness. This bead was set into the hole in the side of the gourd with beeswax and was called *riitho rĩa mwano* (the eye of the divining gourd). Then the conductor of the ceremonies thrust the awl, which by this time was cool, through the base of the gourd at the point called the *rũrĩra* (navel). This procedure was called *gũtheca mwano ndũgatuĩke karimũ* (to pierce the divining gourd so that it might not become dumb, or an idiot). Next the *mũndũ mũgo* reheated the awl, and using it as a branding iron, marked the neck of the gourd with the family brand of the candidate. Having done this, the next thing to do was to *teera* the gourd (smoke its interior with wild olive smoke), as was done to gourds used for milk. Holding a small piece of *mũtamaiyũ* wood from the fire in his right hand and the divining gourd in his left, he twice pushed the smoking brand into the mouth of the gourd and withdrew it. Then he handed it to the candidate, who took the same burning wood and repeated the action three times, making five times in all. This was only ceremonial, and after this the candidate smoked the inside of the gourd properly.

While the candidate was doing this, the conductor of the ceremonies prepared the he-goat for slaughter. He went to the hut of the candidate's senior wife, where he had left his bottles of magic powders that morning, and took out his *kĩnandũ* gourd, a little gourd containing the rendered down fat of a number of he-goats mixed with a little of each magic powder that he normally used in his practice. Taking this *kĩnandũ* with (p.1132) him, he went and untethered the he-goat. While it was held by some of the other *andũ ago* present, he anointed it with the fat in a long line from the tip of its nose, over its back, to the tip of its tail. This done, he called the candidate over to throttle the animal so that it could be cut up and skinned. The candidate had to throttle it with his own hands,

and he had to make the first incision in the skin, after which he left the skinning to the other *andũ ago*. After they had pulled back the skin from both sides of the breast, and had got the carcass ready to draw off its blood, the conductor of the ceremonies came over and made an incision in the little bit of skin that was always left attached to the centre of the breast when any animal was skinned (see Chapter 7). He put his own little finger through this incision to see that it was large enough, and then made the candidate put his right-hand little finger into the incision, and pull off this bit of skin, so that it remained on his finger as a rawhide ring.

This done, the skinning of the animal was halted while the conductor of the ceremonies sent the candidate to bring out the *ndua* containing the ceremonial honey beer. This was brought out and put by the side of the string bag mat on which the new divining gourd was now placed, together with the seven wooden balls (*mbũgũ*) cut from the various species of plant, and any pebble *mbũgũ* which the candidate had accumulated in the preceding weeks in readiness for this ceremony. On it also was the handful of silt and pebbles that he had seized below the waterfall. The honey beer in the *ndua* was then solemnly poured off; first of all the new divining gourd was half filled, then most of the rest was poured into some ordinary *kĩnya* gourds, but the last part of the beer was put into a *gĩtete* bottle gourd and placed upon the "mat" with the other things.

The conductor of the ceremonies took the new divining gourd, which was half full of honey beer, and the candidate took the knife that had been used in preparing the divining gourd, and they went to where the goat had been skinned. Two *andũ ago* held up the goat for the blood letting ceremony, and all the other *andũ ago* present, stood round in a circle. Then the candidate pierced the dead animal's heart, and as he withdrew his knife the conductor of the ceremonies caught the spurting blood in the divining gourd, where it mixed with the honey beer. Then the conductor of the ceremonies, the candidate, and all the fully qualified *andũ ago* who were present, sat down round the mat on stools which had been brought out for them. The conductor of the ceremonies took two sips from the divining gourd containing the honey and blood and passed it to the candidate, who was sitting opposite him, and who took three sips, making five sips in all. Then he passed it back to the (p.1133) conductor of the ceremonies, who took a long drink of the mixture and again passed it to the candidate, who also took a long drink. He then the gourd to one of the fully qualified *andũ ago*, and they passed it from one to the other till all had had a drink of the mixture. This was a kind of communion or loving-cup ceremony by members of the profession, and any unqualified person who took part in it would die. The candidate, by being allowed to take part, was shown that the other professionals welcomed him to their ranks. When every qualified *nũndũ mũgo* present had drunk, they handed the divining gourd to the cnductor of the ceremonies, who drank some of the dregs but did not finish them. This honour fell to the candidate, who drank again last of all.

Third Stage

Some of the *andũ ago* went now to the carcass of the he-goat and proceeded to cut it up and get it ready for the removal of a number of parts which were required as *mbũgũ* (counters) for the new divining gourd. They also cut from the skin certain parts to make five rawhide strips which were needed in the third stage of the initiation proceedings.

The conductor of the ceremonies then took the candidate over to the carcass, and the two of them together cut the following *mbũgũ* from the animal: the hoof of the right foreleg, the hoof of the right backleg, the right horn, the last right-hand rib, the lower end of the sternum, the right eye, the right tongue bone, the tip of the tongue, and a piece of the penis, making nine pieces in all. These were laid on the mat with the seven wooden *mbũgũ*. The five rawhide strips were taken as

follows: two from the skin of the right-hand foreleg for the candidate and his wife, one from the scrotum to make a strip for the divining gourd, one from the foreskin of the penis for the gourd which would have *ira* powder put into it, and one from the third chamber of the stomach (*gakuo kaingĩ*) for the gourd that would have *ũũmũ* powder put into it.

When these five rawhide strips and nine *mbũgũ* had been cut from the animal and placed on the mat, the conductor of the ceremonies told the candidate to fetch a virgin ewe, and while he was fetching this his wife was sent to bring the bag of magic powders from above her bed. This was a fee to the conductor of the ceremonies in order that he might bring out his own divining gourd from the men's hut and give the candidate some of his own *mbũgũ* to start off his new divining gourd. After the ewe had been produced for inspection and approval by the conductor of the ceremonies, he went to the men's hut, taking with him (p.1134) a gourd cupful of honey beer, which he poured out where the divinity gourd had been hanging since the previous evening. Taking the gourd with him, he returned to the mat, and placed his divining gourd at the opposite end to that on which the various new *mbũgũ* were piled.

The conductor of the ceremonies then filled a gourd drinking cup from the *gĩtete* bottle gourd of beer that was lying on the mat. While standing, he prayed to the departed spirits of *andũ ago*, saying, "You see that we are initiating this man into our profession, and we are about to give him *mbũgũ* from a divining gourd that is already in use. We ask you to bless him, to accept him into the profession, to make the new and old *mbũgũ* that we are about to mix agree with each other and blend successfully".

Having prayed thus, he poured out some honey beer from the drinking vessel on the four sides and in the middle of the mat. Next, he took his own divining gourd and poured out a pile of *mbũgũ*, leaving a few inside (for no divining gourd might ever be emptied completely without penalty).

The candidate was instructed to grab as many *mbũgũ* as he could from this pile with his right and his left hands separately, and when he had done so and still had them in his hands, his senior wife was told to do likewise. Both of them put their *mbũgũ* into a single pile in the middle of the mat, where they were counted. Having been counted, they were blessed as follows. The conductor of the ceremonies poured out a gourd cupful of honey beer from the *gĩtete* bottle gourd, and then spat it out all over them, saying as he rubbed them well with the beer, "*Mũroendana na mbũgũ ici ingi*" (May you blend well with these other new *mbũgũ*). Then they were mixed, and both the conductor of the ceremonies and the candidate blessed the whole of the combined pile in like manner. They had thus "caused the counters to adopt each other" (*ciarithania mbũgũ*), and turned their attention to the divining gourd.

The conductor of the ceremonies sprayed a mouthful of honey beer over some *mũkeũ* leaves to wet them, and then used them to wash the blood stains and smears off the new divining gourd. The candidate did likewise. Then they both wiped the outside of the new divining gourd dry with more *mũkeũ* leaves.

This done, the conductor of ceremonies took his gourd of *ira* powder from his own bag of magic powders and poured some into the palm of his left hand, and with his right thumb he rubbed *ira* on the new divining gourd in a straight fine from its base up to the mouth and then round the mouth. Then he handed the divining gourd to the candidate, who dipped his right thumb into the powder in the other man's left palm and similarly anointed the other side of the divining gourd. Then they both (p.1135) rubbed some of the *ira* powder over all the new and old *mbũgũ*. Next,

two pieces of raw fat from the he-goat were rubbed over the divining gourd to remove the *ira*, and then over all the *mbũgũ*.

When this had been done, the conductor of the ceremonies slipped one of the rawhide strips made from the skin of the foreleg of the he-goat on to the candidate's right wrist. The rawhide strip made from the he-goat's scrotum was given to the candidate by the conductor of the ceremonies, who, while holding his hand, made him put it over the neck of the new divining gourd. Next, the candidate was told to put the other rawhide strip from the skin of the foreleg of the goat over the neck of the divining gourd, and his senior wife was told to take it off from there herself and put it on her own left arm. This was called *gũcuma mwano* (to take an ornament off the divining gourd), and the object of this action was that, by so doing, she and the divining gourd might establish a special bond of friendship, because this woman would—as senior wife of the new *mũndũ mũgo*—be guardian of the divining gourd. Then the candidate put the rawhide strip from the foreskin of the he-goat on to the neck of a small empty *mbũthũ* bottle gourd which would in future contain his own *ira*, and the conductor of the ceremonies put the rawhide strip made from the third chamber of the stomach on to the neck of another small empty bottle gourd, which would be the candidate's container of *ũũmũ* powder.

At this stage the conductor of the ceremonies called for the raw breast joint of the goat, into which he inserted five long *mũthuthi* thorns, and sent the joint to be roasted just as all the other joints were set to roast. While the meat was roasting, the goat's *rũambũ* (the fatty membranous lining of its abdominal cavity) was bound round with *mũkeũ* bark to make it into a necklet. This ring necklet was slipped on to the candidate's neck, where it would remain until the day after next, when the fifth ceremony took place.

Then the candidate and the conductor of the ceremonies went back to the mat, and with all the other *andũ ago* sitting round, the officiator put a handful of the *mbũgũ* that had been blessed and purified into the new divining gourd. He repeated this a second time, before passing the divining gourd to the candidate, who solemnly put in three handfuls, making five in all. This was ceremonial, and after this the candidate could put the rest in however he pleased. While he was doing so, his wife was sent to fetch two brand new string bags for the occasion, and at the same time the conductor of the ceremonies went into her hut with a forked stick of *mũthakwa* wood, which had been cut for him by one of the other assisting *andũ ago*. He dug a hole at the side of the candidate's senior wife's bed, and set up the forked stick (*kĩhanya*). (p.1136) This was where, in future, the new divining gourd would always hung.

By the time he returned, the candidate had put all the *mbũgũ* into his new divining gourd, and it was ready to be corked up. This was done with a special cork made from a frond of raffia palm (*mũkĩndu*), bound with banana bark and tied with *mũkeũ* bark. Then the conductor of the ceremonies transferred a little of his own *ira* powder from his gourd to the candidate's. This and the new divining gourd were put into one of the new string bags. Next he took his own *ũũmũ* powder gourd and transferred a little to the candidate's *mbũthũ*, and finally, he took three other new *mbũthũ* (which had no strips of rawhide), and into these he transferred from his own *mbũthũ* a little of the folllowing three magic powders: *rũthuko, ng'ondu*, and *thenge*. These four *mbũthũ* gourds were then put into the other new string bag to form the nucleus of the candidate's magic powders. Thus he was provided with the essential apparatus of a *mũndũ mũgo*.

The conductor of the ceremonies now put those of his own *mbũgũ* that were not grasped by the candidate and his wife back in his gourd, and took his two bags off the mat and set them by one of

the granaries of the homestead. This done, the *andũ ago* all sat down on their stools round the mat, with the conductor of the ceremonies and the candidate facing each other, and the former called for the roasted breast with the five thorns in it. This he took in both hands, and with his teeth pulled out one of the thorns, bit it in two, dropped it on the ground, and ate a mouthful of meat from where he had pulled out the thorn. He repeated this act with the second thorn. Then he handed the joint to the candidate, and as he did so, said, "*Wanyu wakinĩ*" (see glossary), and the candidate answered, "*Wanyu wakinĩ*". This exchange of greetings was a sign that the candidate was accepted as a novice, and we shall refer to him as such in the next section of this chapter.

The novice pulled out the remaining three thorns with his teeth, biting each in half as he did so, and taking a bite of meat from each place where he pulled out a thorn. Then he handed the joint to the conductor of the ceremonies, who tore off a mouthful and passed it back to the novice, who did likewise and passed it back again, and so on, until they had eaten the whole joint. As soon as they had done this they went over to where the meat was roasting, and the conductor of the ceremonies and the novice together apportioned the roasted joints as follows: the *rũcuthĩ* (the sacrum with the lumbar and caudal vertebrae attached), *mũromo wa ihu* (first chamber of the stomach), *ngũngũgũ* (cranium), *ngingo* (neck), and *kĩhaco gĩa gĩthũri* (forked bit at the end of (p.1137) the sternum) were put into a half-gourd to be eaten by the novice and the conductor of the ceremonies in the evening after the guests had departed. One shoulder, one half-saddle joint (*ikengeto*), one *rũthĩa* (cheek), part of the liver, and part of the intestines were given to the visiting *andũ ago;* the right pelvic bone with part of the leg meat attached (*rũhonge*) was for the wife of the conductor of the ceremonies, the left for the novice's wife, and the remainder was divided among member's of the candidate's family.

While the people to whom the meat was thus apportioned were eating it, the conductor of the ceremonies and the novice took the two new string bags in which the novice's divining gourd and *mbũthũ* gourds had been put, and went to the novice's senior wife's hut to hang them ceremonially on the new *kĩhanya* (forked stick), and to dedicate the *kĩhanya*.

First of all they offered honey beer and finger millet grain to God and to the departed spirits of *andũ ago*, praying to them to bless the *kĩhanya*, the home of the new divining gourd. Then they hung the two string bags on the *kĩhanya*, and having done so, they poured beer over them, and over the *kĩhanya* and at its base, and prayed that God and the spirits might bless the new divining gourd and magic powders in the service of the *mũndũ mũgo* who was being initiated, and that they would prevent the divining gourd from destroying (*thetha*) his family. Then they poured dry finger millet grain and *ira* powder at the foot of the *kĩhanya* and prayed that the new *mũndũ mũgo's* family and stock might become as plentiful as this finger millet grain.

When this was done, the time had come to distribute among the assembled company the sugar-cane beer and all the food that had been prepared for the feast. This was done by the novice and his wife in accordance with the normal rules of beer distribution (see Chapter 8).

The rest of the day was given up to feasting, and in the evening when the guests had all departed, the conductor of the ceremonies and the novice placed the bones and stomach contents of the he-goat on a fire made of wild olive wood in the courtyard. The charred remains of these bones would later be used in making the magic powder called *thenge*. Finally, before retiring for the night, the novice and the conductor of the ceremonies mixed a little honey and water and put it in a *ndua* gourd with fermenting loofahs to make ceremonial beer for the morrow. These two men then ate the joints that had been set aside for them earlier in the day, after which the novice went to sleep

in his senior wife's hut, and the conductor of the ceremonies and his wife in the men's hut, but neither couple had sexual intercourse.

p.1138
Fourth Stage

The second day of the initiation ceremonies was a quiet one, and it commenced with a ceremonial offering of honey beer to the deity to the spirits of the departed *andũ ago*, after which a little honey beer was poured on the remains of the fire that was made over the bones of the he-goat. Then the ashes were sorted through, the charred bones of the he-goat were collected, put into a potsherd, and laid aside until the following day.

The novice then issued instructions to his family to spend the day preparing sugar-cane beer to be consumed on the following day, after which he set off with the conductor of the ceremonies to spend the day in the bush and forest, learning how to collect, identify, and utilise the various plants that were used in making magic powders.

The two men returned in the evening with a large assortment of leaves, roots, and stems, which they sorted out and placed in separate potsherds before putting them away for the night. This was the novice's first lesson in the ingredients of magic powders, and he would have to have a great many more such lessons before he was competent to go and collect his own.

Fifth Stage

Early in the morning of the third day, before it was light, the conductor of the ceremonies went over to the hut where the novice and his wife had slept, and instructed the novice to take off the rawhide strip on his finger, and put it into the divining gourd to become a *mbũgũ*. He also was told to take off the rawhide strip on his right wrist and put it at the bottom of the bag containing the divining gourd. The novice's wife was told to take the rawhide strip off her left wrist, tear it to pieces, and drop these at the head end of her bed. Then the novice was instructed to make the normal offerings of beer to the departed spirits of his family, and to include in his offerings beer for the departed spirits of the *andũ ago*, this being the first time that he, the novice, was allowed to offer beer to the spirits of the *andũ ago*. Up till now this had been done on his behalf by the conductor of the ceremonies. As a novice on the third day of his initiation he was sufficiently identified with the profession to be entitled to pray to the spirits of departed members of the profession. Having thus offered beer and prayed, they all waited until the sun was well up and then the conductor of the ceremonies gave instructions for (p.1139) the novice to have his head ceremonially shaved. This was done by his senior wife, and he caught all the hair in his cloak, and hid it in the bush. Then his wife was shaved by the wife of the conductor of the ceremonies and she went and hid her hair.

This done, the novice brought out a fat ram for slaughter. This was not for a sacrifice, but to provide meat and rawhide strips, and more important still, to provide a *rũambũ*, or omentum (the fatty, membranous lining of the abdominal cavity) for the ceremony of covering and uncovering his eyes.

By this time members of the novice's family and his friends had started to arrive at the homestead, and each brought an offering or or present for the novice. These presents included skins and a few rams and goats from his wealthier friends, and bits of iron and soda from his poorer friends and relatives, but everyone of them brought him something to celebrate the occasion. None of these presents, however, as we shall see, did he keep for himself.

The novice suffocated the ram and pierced it to draw off its blood, after which the conductor of the ceremonies opened it up and took out the *rũambũ*. He also cut two strips from the skin of the right foreleg of the animal, which he put on the novice's right wrist and on his wife's right wrist.

By now all the *andũ ago* who were present on the first day were also assembling, and formed a circle round the novice to witness the ceremony of *gũkunũra* (to uncover), which really completed his initiation. The conductor of the ceremonies put the *rũambũ* completely over the head of the novice so that he could not see anything. Then the novice was blessed by the conductor of the ceremonies with these words, "You are now initiated, a member of our profession; may you be wise and skilful, may you be favoured by the profession of *ũgo*, may you prosper in it". All the others standing round then responded in chorus, "May you be favoured by the profession of *ũgo*".

By this time the novice began to feel the *rũambũ* drying and hardening on his face and he begged to have the thing removed. He was told he had first to pay a fee of a very big he-goat skin. He therefore sent his wife for this. When it had been produced, the conductor of the ceremonies rubbed *ira* powder on the *rũambũ* over the man's eyes, and then pretended to cut the skin with a *mũthakwa* wood splinter, after which he used a knife to cut a slit in it at each eye so that the novice could see again. As this was done the conductor of the ceremonies said, "May your eyes now have the power to see the future, to see prophecies in the *mbũgũ* of your divining gourd, and be wise". He then rubbed *ira* powder on both the man's eyebrows. Then he lifted the whole thing off his head (p.1140) saying as he did so, "*Nĩtwagũkunũrĩra ũgo*" (We uncover the profession of *ũgo* to you. (In other words: We accept you as a member of our profession)). Next the conductor of the ceremonies removed the necklet made from a goat's stomach lining from the new *mũndũ mũgo*'s neck by unwinding the *mũkeũ* bark that was used to bind it.

Having removed all of these things from the new *mũndũ mũgo*, the conductor of the ceremonies called for a wooden board, and with all the other *andũ ago* watching, he showed the new *mũndũ mũgo* how to make a *rũmũrĩ* (candle), which was an essential part of every *mũndũ mũgo*'s outfit. The fatty, abdominal linings of the goat and of the ram were placed on the board, together with leaves of a *mũtongu* bush and leaves of the plant called *rũmũrĩ*, some castor oil, the wax of the nest of the solitary bee called *njũkĩ ya njoore*, and some fat from the *kĩnandũ* gourd of the conductor of the ceremonies, making seven ingredients in all. These were all pounded and beaten up together until they had been formed into a solid lump about the size of a cricket ball, and waxy in texture. This was a *rũmũrĩ*, and it was put into the new *mũndũ mũgo's* string bag that contained his divining gourd. It was a highly inflammable mixture, and he was instructed that whenever he wanted a light in connection with his work, he might never use an ordinary fire-brand or ember, but had to break off a lump of this *rũmũrĩ*, impale it on the end of a splinter of wood, and light it. It would then burn brightly, and was his ceremonial lamp.

The *rũmũrĩ* having been made, the new *mũndũ mũgo* was told that the time had come for him to pay the fees for his initiation. The conductor of the ceremonies was given seven very large skins, which, counting the two he had already received, made nine in all. His wife got two large skins. Each of the four *andũ ago* who had helped to throw him into the pond at the waterfall on the first day got two, and the one who had carried his cloak for him and helped him with the he-goat got an extra one, so that between these four *andũ ago* there were nine skins. The new *mũndũ mũgo* then divided up the skins and bits of iron and lumps of Magadi soda brought as presents by his relations and friends. First of all he gave every other *mũndũ mũgo* present a skin or a lump of iron, and then he distributed the rest of the gifts among the other guests.

This done, the beer was brought forth and everyone eligible to drink beer participated in a beer feast. Meanwhile, the girls and younger women in the homestead set about grinding the plants used in making the magic powders called *rũthuko*, *ũũmũ*, *kĩnoria*, and *mũcanjamũka*. They ground the roots and stems of the plants that were collected on the previous day and set them to dry in order that they might be reground on the next day.

The initiation proper was then over, but several things remained to (p.1141) to be done by the conductor of the ceremonies, who had now assumed the relationship of professional father and teacher of the new *mũndũ mũgo*. That evening he and the new *mũndũ mũgo* set the bones of the ram slaughtered that day to roast in the fire, and retired for the night. They spent the next day making magic powder. These, their ingredients, the method of making them, and the ceremonies connected with them will be dealt with in a separate section later in this chapter.

Uninitiated Andũ Ago

Among those who worked in magic, there were always a few who were known as *ago α kĩrimũ* (untaught *ago*). These were men who had been called by the deity and who had eventually decided that if they did not take up the profession they would never have peace. Due to poverty, however, they were unable to consider being initiated in the normal way.

They became apprentices in the profession and in return for a small fee they were given a divining gourd and the essential magic powders by a fully qualified man in the district. They were also taught how to perform purification ceremonies and how to divine by means of the *mbũgũ*. As uninitiated members of the profession, however, they were not allowed to keep their divining gourd and bag of magic powders in the hut of their senior, wife, or even in the men's hut, but had to keep it in one of the granaries of their homestead. Nor could they partake of the special beer called *mũguĩ wa ago* (*andũ ago*'s arrow), that was drunk by *andũ ago* at the initiation of other members of the profession and at ceremonies connected with the divining gourd. They also suffered in other minor ways, in addition to being unable to acquire much fame. In due course, however, they would get together sufficient wealth to be able to pay for full initiation, which they always did as soon as possible.

The Mũndũ Mũgo's Charm

The most important charm ever made by a *mũndũ mũgo* was that made by the "father in the profession" for the man whose initiation ceremony he had conducted.

As we have seen, once a new member of the profession had been duly initiated, the task of instructing him and guiding him while he was (p.1142) learning all the intricacies of the profession rested upon the man who had conducted his initiation, and it was this man who eventually had to make his *gĩthitũ kĩrĩa kĩnene* (special charm), which every fully qualify *mũndũ mũgo* had sooner or later to possess. The charm was made as follows.

After the new member of the profession had been practising for a year or two, he was told by his instructor that it was time that he had this *gĩthitũ*, and he was instructed to acquire by purchase or otherwise, the horn of a male Thomsons' gazelle. Having acquired such a horn, he told his instructor that he was ready to have his *gĩthitũ* made.

A day was fixed, and on the previous evening the new member of the profession made a small brew of honey beer, which was to be used as a fee for the man who was coming to make the charm. But early in the morning he took a little of it, prayed to God, and offered it to him, and also to departed members of the profession.

When the man who was coming to make the charm arrived, an immature but fattened he-goat was slaughtered, and from it a little fat was taken and a long thin strip of skin from the right side of the animal. The meat was then set to roast while the making of the charm proceeded. Into the gazelle horn he first put a little raw honey, then a little of the he-goat's fat, and some of each of the following magic powders, in this order: *ikũnja*, *njeehũ*, *ikanda*, *ũũmũ*, *rũthuko*, *thiari*, *mũcanjamũka*, *kĩnoria*, *ng'ondu*, *mũgũthũkũ*, *thenge*, and finally, *rũthuko* again.

The *mũndũ mũgo* who was making the charm then produced some wax of the solitary bee (*njoore*), with which he sealed the open end of the horn, ramming the wax in firmly. Next he asked the *mũndũ mũgo* for whom the charm was being made to fetch 18 *mũthuthi* thorns, and while these were being obtained he emptied on to a small stone a little of the magic powders *ikũnja*, *ikanda*, and *njeehũ*. When the thorns were brought, the *mũndũ mũgo* who was preparing the charm stuck them one at a time into the mixed powders on the stone in such a way that the tip of the thorn broke off. He then pushed this broken thorn into the wax that sealed the charm, and broke off its base where it projected from the wax. He repeated this performance with each of the 18 thorns (2 x 9 or *makenda merĩ*). As he took each of the first nine and did what has been described, he uttered one sentence of the following formula:

Ndatuuhia thũ.	I make blunt all enemies.
Ndatuuhia riitho rĩũru.	I make blunt the evil eye.
Ndatuuhia nyamũ cia gĩthaka.	I make blunt wild animals.
Ndatuuhia wagi.	I make blunt all lacking.
Ndoina mũtino.	I break misfortune.
Ndatuuhia rũruto.	I make blunt unseen evil. (p.1143)
Ndatuuhia mũrimũ.	I make blunt disease.
Ndatuuhia ũimbo.	I make blunt swellings.
Ndatuuhia ũũru wothe.	I make blunt all manner of evils.

As he took each of the second series of nine thorns and similarly broke their points and put them into the wax that sealed the charm, he addressed a series of unfinished threats to the *gĩthitũ*, as follows:

Ũngĩkareka mwene akorũo nĩ thũ . . .	If you should ever let your owner be caught unawares by an enemy . . .
Ũngĩkareka one riitho rĩũru . .	If you should ever let him see an evil eye . . .
Ũngĩkareka nyamũ ĩmũrĩe . . .	If you should ever let a wild beast eat him . . .
Ũngĩkamwagithia itaha . . .	If you should cause him to lack profit and gain . . .
Ũngĩkareka one mũtino . . .	If you should let him have misfortune . . .
Ũngĩaga kũmũninĩra rũruto . . .	If you should fail to make an end of unseen evils for him . . .
Ũngĩaga kuorota mũrimũ . . .	If you should fail to point the finger of destruction at disease . . .
Ũngĩaga kũhuha ũimbo . . .	If you should fail to blow away swellings . . .
Ũngĩaga kũmũkũũra ũũru-inĩ wothe . . .	If you should fail to save him from all evil . . .

None of these threats were completed, and the charm was not told what would happen to it if it did fail in its various duties, but the threat was the more powerful for being incomplete. Then the charm was wrapped from tip to base with the leather thong from the side of the goat, after which it was anointed with nine circular bands, five of *ira* powder and castor oil and four of *ũũmũ* powder and castor oil. These alternated, starting and ending with *ira* powder.

This done, the charm was rubbed longitudinally with *ira* powder from tip to base, after which it was placed in the cupped hands of the man for whom it was made. The maker then took a drinking horn of honey beer, bit off a mouthful of *kĩgombe* grass, sipped some beer, and spat the grass and beer over the charm held in its owner's hands. This he did nine times, uttering nine blessings. The

charm was now ready, and it was put into the string bag of the owner, together with his divining gourd, his *kĩnandũ* gourd, and his bottle of *ira* powder.

As a fee, the maker of the charm, besides having the beer brewed for (p.1144) him and being given a share of the meat of the he-goat, received one live virgin ewe.

This charm was transferred to the bag containing his magic powders whenever the *mũndũ mũgo* went anywhere with his powders in the course of his professional work, and it not only served to keep the man safe from all kinds of harm, but it was also used by him in many ceremonies when treating the sick. Furthermore, the pointed end of the horn was the normal thing used to dig the shallow "basins" in the ground in all *tahĩkia* purification ccremonies. Apart from a fully qualified *mũndũ mũgo* there was only one other class of person that might legally acquire this particular charm, and they were men who, without qualifying as full members of the profession, specialised as *ahuhi*, or as people who cured diseases, pains, and swellings, by blowing (*huha*).

The Functions of Andũ Ago

Once a *mũndũ mũgo* had been initiated, he was for a long time dependent for advice and help upon the man who conducted his initiation. For some time the two men worked together, and the senior man called his pupil whenever he had some ceremony to perform which the new *mũndũ mũgo* had not yet seen. Thus the pupil gradually learned the general methods of the profession and was enabled to find out for himself in which direction or speciality his own ability lay.

Andũ Ago as General Practitioners

Some *andũ ago* never specialised, but remained general practitioners. Apart from the ordinary tasks of divining, the *mũndũ mũgo* who decided to be a general practitioner had a wide assortment of duties that he was called upon to perform. A great many of the purification rites and ceremonies that were necessary to the Kikuyu individual in the course of his life could be carried out only with the help of a *mũndũ mũgo*, so every general practitioner received innumerable calls to perform the cleansing ceremony o*igũtahĩkia* (see Chapter 28).

The general practitioner was also needed in connection with the ceremonies involved in changing a man or woman from being a member of the Kikuyu initiation guild into a member of the Ũkabi (p.1145) initiation guild and vice versa. He was called in to assist in the curing of sickness and disease that had failed to respond to herbal treatment, and his advice was sought—and paid for—in connection with herbal remedies. This happened in spite of the fact that almost every Kikuyu elder had a fair knowledge of herbal remedies, and in spite of the fact that there were certain members of the profession who specialised as herbalists. The reason is that the general practitioner, because of the nature of his work, was more likely to come into contact with people having knowledge of herbal remedies, and therefore more likely to have a wider general knowledge of the uses of plants than ordinary men, who might forget the necessary herbal ingredients of a remedy if they had not had reason to use it for many years.

Other tasks undertaken by general practitioners were the making of minor charms to prevent illness and bring good fortune during travel. However, the making of more important charms, such as those carried by warriors in battle and those to protect cattle, was usually left to the men who specialised in the particular branch of magic with which the charm required was connected.

There was one type of purification ceremony for which the general practitioner was never called in, and that was the *hukũra* ceremony connected with death. When a warrior had returned from a successful raid having killed an enemy, or when a death had taken place in a homestead and the

hukũra ceremonies had to be performed, it was not the ordinary general practitioner who was sent for, but a *mũndũ mũgo* who, due to age, had retired from active practice, and only undertook work connected with death. Such a man had to be one who no longer had any wives of childbearing age and no young children, for otherwise his connection with purification and other rites concerning death would bring uncleanness upon his own family. Moreover, it was essential that a *mũndũ mũgo* who undertook such work should not be in active general practice, as if he was there would be a risk of his transferring the contagion of death to his ordinary patients.

For those *andũ ago* who did specialise there were many branches of the Profession from which to choose, according to where their special talents lay. These were fields in which a general practitioner was never consulted, for example, divining the ways and means of a raid on the Maasai, or magical protection in connection with initiation ceremonies, diseases, and insect plagues. It must be kept in mind, however, in the following discussion of these practices, that specialists did combine a certain amount of general practice work, since this meant more fees.

p.1146

Andũ Ago as Diviners and Prophets

As we have seen, every *mũndũ mũgo* received a divining gourd on his initiation, which he took out from time to time to do a little divining, for if a divining gourd was left unused for a long period it was liable to resent the neglect and cause sickness and trouble to its owner. All andũ *ago*, however, were not really diviners, and it is probably true to say that only about ten per cent of all *andũ ago* ever specialised in *ũragũri* (the art of divination and prophecy) and became famous in this branch of the profession.

Aside from the work done by specialists in the field, the large body of general practitioners did a certain amount of divination in connection with minor children's ills and village troubles.

Divination by General Practitioners

The practice of divination was called *kũragũra*, and when a man consulted a *mũndũ rnũgo* he was said to go to *ragũna* (to cause him to divine). Men who wished to consult a general practitioner in connection with some minor matter had either to go themselves or send a deputy to the home of the *mũndũ mũgo*, for ordinarily a divining gourd was not taken from the owner's homestead. Moreover, anyone going to consult a general practitioner had to go early in the morning so as to arrive at dawn, for if he were to go later in the day he would probably find that the *mũndũ mũgo* was not at home, as he had been called out to perform some purification or other ceremony.

Any person going to consult a general practitioner had to take with him a fee of either a piece of iron, a small goat or sheep skin, a lump of soda, or a bundle of some kind of grain. Normally, a general practitioner had anything from three to six people come to consult him each morning, and the recognised practice was to divine simultaneously for all who came.

Soon after dawn, first one man, then another, and then another appeared in his homestead and came to his hut. On being asked what they wanted, they replied, "*Ndoka gũkũragũria*" (I've come to consult you as a diviner), and handed over the fee that they had brought. After waiting a short while to see if anyone else was coming, the *mũndũ mũgo* sent them out into the courtyard, and then went across to the hut of his senior wife to fetch his divining gourd, his *mbũthũ* gourd of *ira*, and (p.1147) the goat skin which he used as a divining mat, which was the skin of the goat that had been slaughtered on the day of his initiation. If the man had been a *mũndũ mũgo* for a great many years and this goat skin had rotted and fallen to pieces with age, then he used the string bag

mat that was used in the ceremonies of his initiation and which had also been kept for this purpose, and if by any chance this had also fallen to pieces, he made a second string bag mat to replace it, but he might never replace the skin of the goat used at his initiation with another skin.

Having fetched these things, he spread out his mat somewhere between the men's hut and the entrance to his homestead, and stood the bag containing the divining gourd on one corner of it. He then fetched his stool from his hut and sat down on it. With the divining gourd resting "eye" upwards on his knees, he poured some *ira* powder into the palm of his left hand, and dipped his right thumb into it. He then rubbed the *ira* on his right thumb on to the divining gourd in a line starting from the base or *rũrĩra*, upwards in a straight line past the eye, up the neck of the gourd, and thence up the cow's tail stopper to its tip. Then he turned the divining gourd over and similarly anointed the other side. This done, he held his divining gourd in both hands with the mouth facing the rising sun and prayed to God as follows:

> *Wee Ngai, Riũa, ndaroka gũkũhoya ũ'he ũhoro wa njama ĩno yoka kũndagũria. Wĩre mbũgũ ũhoro wothe nacio injĩre. Ndakũhoya tondũ tũraire tũkuĩte na nĩwe Ngai watũma riũa rĩtũũkĩrie. Otũtindie wega, na ũtũhe ũũgĩ wa kũmenya ũhoro wa andũ aya*. (God, the Sun, I pray to You this morning that You may tell me about this gathering of people which has come to ask me to divine. Tell the divining counters everything, and let them tell me. I ask You, because we have spent the night dead, and it is You, Oh God, who has made the sun wake us up. Keep us safe during the day, and give us wisdom to understand the affairs of these people).

This was the prayer used regularly in the past by one *mũndũ mũgo* of my acquaintance. Each had his own particular version but all were to the same effect. Then he turned to Mount Kenya, and prayed, "*Wee Ngai ũikaraga Kĩrĩmaara, na nĩwe wombire kĩrima kĩu, ndakũhoya ũgo. Wĩre mbũgũ cinjĩre ũhoro wa andũ aya*" (Oh God, You who dwell on Mount Kenya, and who created that mountain, I ask You for the art of divination. Tell the divining counters to tell me the affairs of these men). Then he turned to the Aberdare Range and prayed in like manner, and then to the Ngong Hills. He did not pray to God in Donyo Sabuk, for this was a hill in the east, and in praying to God, the Sun, to start with, he had in effect prayed to God in this residence.

Having prayed to the deity, the *mũndũ mũgo* then prayed to the spirits of the deceased *andũ ago*, addressing them as *inyuĩ ago arĩa me thĩ* (you [p.1148] *ago* who are in the ground), and he asked them also for wisdom and that they might aid him in his divining. Having finished praying, he unstoppered the divining gourd and wiped his face and his eyes with the cow's tail stopper "in order that he might be able to see the messages of the *mbũgũ* clearly". Then he spat on the divining gourd in blessing and proceeded first of all to *ĩragũrĩra* (to divine for himself). He poured out two lots of *mbũgũ* saying aloud as he did so, "*Ndĩ mũhoro niĩ?*" (Am I at peace). This question was addressed to the divining gourd, which would answer by means of the *mbũgũ*.

Having poured out the two lots, he did not count them, but simply looked at them and from a glance he knew whether all was well with him or not. If it was not all well, then after the people who were consulting him had gone, he proceeded to divine on his own behalf further to find out what was wrong at his home, and how to remedy it.

Having finished casting for himself, he held the divining gourd out to the people who had come to consult him and they all spat on it simultaneously to bless it, and at the same time they addressed it, "*Ndĩ mũhoro niĩ*?" (Am I at peace). Then the *mũndũ mũgo* poured out a big pile of *mbũgũ* in the centre of the mat away from the pile he had poured on his own account, and told those who had come to consult him each to take handfuls from this pile and lay them on the mat, and to go on taking handfuls until the pile was exhausted.

When they had done this he told each person to count their *mbũgũ*, to lay them in piles often, and to keep any surplus that was less than ten in their hands. When they had done this, he asked each in turn, "How many units often (*mĩrongo*) have you, and how many left over?", and each man answered for himself. The *mũndũ mũgo* then considered these answers and cast his eyes over the piles to estimate the answers that the *mbũgũ* were giving.

From each man's pile he took out certain *mbũgũ* which had a special meaning to him, and these he put back into the divining gourd. This done, he told the people consulting him to push the *mbũgũ* in front of them over to where his own two piles were and leave them there. These *mbũgũ* were not used again, and this first round had been merely preliminary. From the nature of the *mbũgũ* that each individual obtained, and from the number of units of ten and the number of the remainder of each person's lots, the *mũndũ mũgo* had formed certain opinions as to the cause of each of his clients' troubles, but this had to be confirmed.

Having put certain *mbũgũ* from each man's pile back into the divining gourd, he shook it thoroughly to mix up all the contents, and then took the applicants each in turn in order to divine further the cause of their (p.1149) trouble. This time he acted quite differently, according to the nature of the problem that was brought to him.

For example, perhaps the first man consulting him had come to find out whether someone in his village who was seriously ill was going to die or not, and if the person was to recover, what steps were to be taken to bring about the recovery. Turning to this man, the *mũndũ mũgo* addressed the divining gourd and its contents and asked it the following questions, "Is it the spirit of the deceased mother of the man who is causing the trouble in his home? Is it the spirit of his deceased father? Is it Ngai, the supreme God, who is causing the trouble? Is it some *thahu* which has come upon the family through the breaking of tribal law? Is the trouble due to some living person who is an enemy?" Having done this, he poured out a fresh pile of *mbũgũ* from the divining gourd in front of the individual concerned, and he told the man to count them into piles. When this had been done he studied the piles to learn the answer to his questions. Having obtained an answer from reading the *mbũgũ*, he addressed the man and said the trouble had been brought to him by such-and-such a spirit, or from this cause or that, and he then told him what he was to do. This might be to sacrifice to the deceased spirits or to God, or it might be as simple as a purification ceremony. In some cases the *mũndũ mũgo*, if he prescribed a purification ceremony that had to be conducted by a *mũndũ mũgo*, would arrange to go and perform it himself later in the day, but more often he would tell the man to call in some other *mũndũ mũgo* to perform the ceremony.

Sometimes, after consulting the *mbũgũ*, the *rnũndũ mũgo* came to the conclusion that the cause of the trouble did not lie in any of the matters mentioned above, in which case he would cast more *mbũgũ* to make further enquiries. Sometimes, too, the *mũndũ mũgo* saw in the answers given by the *mbũgũ* that the case was hopeless, and that whatever happened the patient would die. In that case he told the man consulting him that Ngai wanted the sick person to die and that nothing could be done, as the deity had ordained it.

The next person consulting the *mũndũ mũgo* might have come for a quite different reason, perhaps to know if the time was propitious for a proposed journey. The *mũndũ mũgo* then turned to him and cast a pile of *mbũgũ* for him in the appropriate way, and answered him.

Having dealt with all those who had come to consult him, the *mũndũ mũgo* put away his divining gourd and prepared for other duties of the day. Once he had put his divining gourd away again he would not take it out until the next morning no matter who came to consult him.

If a man who had come to consult a *mũndũ mũgo*, as described above, was not satisfied with the explanation of the trouble that had been (p.1150) given him, and thought the man had divined wrongly, he went off and picked several short lengths of green wood of a number of different tree, and in his own mind he made each of these represent a different solution. One represented the solution that the *mũndũ mũgo* had divined, and the others, solutions that he himself thought more probable. He went to the *mũndũ mũgo* and handed him these, and the *mũndũ mũgo* picked up each stick in turn and considered it, and after due consideration he said which was the stick that represented the solution. Usually he picked the stick that represented the answer he had already given, although according to the law of averages this would seem impossible. However, it did very frequently happen, and if not, a *mũndũ mũgo* soon lost his clientele, as he was proved to be a bad diviner and one who made mistakes.

The many *andũ ago* that I consulted gave only one explanation as to how they knew which stick represented the answer they had already given, "God tells us". If by any chance a *mũndũ mũgo* selected a stick which gave a different answer, he admitted the mistake and cast a fresh lot of *mbũgũ* in order that the man might see whether the answer given coincided with that of the first lot of *mbũgũ* or that given by the stick, or possibly was yet a third answer. If the answer was different again, he advised his client to consult some other *mũndũ mũgo*, as it was clear that for some unknown reason the truth in this particular case was being hidden from him, so he could not helo.

Divination by Specialists

Some members of the profession of *andũ ago* did not become general practitioners, but specialised in the art of divining. It was these men who were consulted if there was a severe drought in one part of the country, if crops failed, or if the warriors wished to go to battle with the Maasai.

Such specialists were but seldom consulted on private matters, such as illness and uncleanness, although they were usually willing to oblige members of the village they lived in. They derived most of their work and fees from the calls made upon them by delegations sent by whole villages to seek advice in connection with public matters. The method of divination was by means of the divining gourd and its *mbũgũ*, and it differed in no way from the methods used by the general practitioner·

The specialist in divining was, however, usually much more certain and definite in the answers that he gave, and was to a certain extent a (p.1151) prophet who seemed to have supernatural powers. He would often describe in advance, incidents that would occur in the course of the journey or the raid that he was being consulted about, and it was though the uncanny accuracy of his prophecies that a man gradually attained the position of a specialist.

Many of these specialists in the past were in the habit not only of making prophecies when officially consulted about some matter or other, but also of making general prophecies of future events which had become known to them through their special powers. Thus a very famous specialist in divining who was known as Mũrũ wa Kinga foretold in considerable detail, how white men would come into the country, entering it from the direction of the Ngong Hills, how they would have fire in their mouths, how they would first be liked, then hated, and eventually reconciled with the people, to whom they would bring new kinds of wealth.

Another, Mũrũ wa Kĩbirũ, foretold in picturesque, but nevertheless very accurate language, of the coming of the railway, which was described as a long, large snake-like creature, which would have

fire in its head and would carry great loads for a race of white people who would have smoke in their mouths and fire in their bags. He told the people that when they eventually saw this great snake they were not to flee from the land, for as the result of its coming there would be new wealth.

Yet another *mũndũ mũgo* foretold that the white people who were coming would first come on foot but that much later they would fly like butterflies.

These specialists in divining and prophecy used to predict with great accuracy where the Maasai herds were and what would be the result of raids, and they also used to forewarn the people of Maasai raids. And, as we have seen, when they sent the warriors on a raid with their blessing, they would describe a certain number of cattle in minute detail, and say that in the herds, raided cattle answering these descriptions would be found, and that they were to be handed over to them (the diviners) as their share of the spoils.

All men who practised as specialists in divining had two divining gourds. One of these was that which they acquired at their initiation, and which never left the homestead, except on rare occasions when the owner was called in to help initiate a new candidate for the profession. The second was a divining gourd specially acquired by the specialist to use when called upon to go and divine in some distant area, or even for some other tribe. For from time to time the really famous specialists (p.1152) received delegations from distant parts of the country asking them to come, and they then took their second or travelling divining gourd. When such a specialist had been sent for to divine in some public matter in a distant district, he was always willing, while in that district, to be consulted by private individuals. In this way he obtained enough fees to make his journey worth-while.

Quite a number of the more famous diviners, both of the past and also in this century, were called in from time to time by the Maasai tribe, and it was through this practice that in time the family of Lenana, which was of pure Kikuyu origin, came to settle in Maasai country and become chief of the southern Maasai.

Women as Diviners and Prophets

Women did not normally become *andũ ago*, but occasionally a woman would be *nyitwo nĩ ũgo* (seized by magic) and become famous as a prophetess, seer, or a healer by magical means. Such women had the right to acquire magic powders from the professional *andũ ago*, and to use them, but they were never initiated into the profession, nor did they ever have a divining gourd. Their prestige and power was based upon their ability to prophecy accurately, and their reputation of being in such close contact with the deity as to receive messages directly from Him. Some, indeed, were reputed to be taken up into the sky to receive their messages, being taken up bodily at night through the roofs of their huts.

One woman in particular, Nyakairũ, who lived at Kĩmathi on the Rũirũ River during the latter part of the last century, achieved very great fame indeed as a prophetess and worker in magic, and she was known all over Kikuyu country from Nyeri to Dagoretti. This woman, according to tradition, was constantly taken up into the sky and given messages to take to the people. She also frequently had trances in which she vividly saw future events which would happen to people whom she had never met. She would then go through the land searching for these people to tell them what she had seen.

If they refused to believe her and did not do the things which she ordered them to do to avoid the disaster, these things always came true, whereas by obeying her the disasters were avoided. In time

the woman acquired many magic powers and it became customary to ask her to make magic to ward off the disasters she foretold, instead of calling in some male member of the profession.

p.1153
Divination and Prophecy by the Entrails of Goats and Sheep

Certain members of the *ũgo* profession had the special power of being able to see future events by examining the entrails of a slaughtered goat or sheep. This was called *kũragũra na nda ya mbũri* (to divine by the entrails of a goat or sheep). Men who acquired a reputation for being accurate in this type of prophecy were from time to time called in when an animal was slaughtered, in order that they might examine the entrails and foretell the future from them. Among the Kikuyu, however, this practice had not reached the next stage, that of deliberately slaughtering an animal in order that omens might be read in the entrails.

Quite apart from qualified members of the profession, a certain number of ordinary members of the public had this special ability to see the future in the entrails of an animal, but usually this was taken to be a sign that an individual was being "called" by the deity to enter the profession of *ũgo*, and sooner or later every man endowed with this special power became a *mũndũ mũgo*.

Andũ Ago as Specialists

In Magical Protection

Another branch in which certain members of the profession specialised was in magical protection (*kũrigita*). General practitioners also provided a certain amount of magical protection for individual families, but the function of these specialists in magical protection was somewhat different. Their work included providing magical protection to whole districts lying on the Maasai boundary so as to prevent Maasai raids in that area, making magical means of protecting districts from disease (see Chapter 21) and locust plagues, and protecting flocks and herds from attacks by wild beasts. Very often they also specialised in the making of protective charms.

Other than their divining gourds, such specialists worked simply by means of their magic powders, of which they had a great variety over and above those which were common to all *andũ ago*. Like the specialists in divining, they were often called in to districts far removed from their own, therefore, they too, usually had two divining gourds, one for home (p.1154) and one for travelling to other areas. This was because any specialist in magical protection usually had to consult his divining pebbles before he could start in on his magical acts.

The ceremonies used to make magical protection of the boundaries so as to prevent successful Maasai raids differed from each other in minor details, according to the ideas of the specialist called in, but in basic principles they were the same. When a specialist was called in to *rigita rũtere* (make a magical protection of borders), he was met by a delegation of elders of the territorial unit concerned, and taken to one of their homesteads. He then demanded a young female sheep (*kagondu*), which had to be an animal that was *gatarĩ kĩruka* (one that had no living relatives). Having been provided with such an animal, the *mũndũ mũgo* also demanded a fat ram, which was slaughtered to provide him with meat to eat. The *mũndũ mũgo* then took the virgin ewe into the bush, and proceeded to put magic powders into every one of its orifices: its mouth, its anus, its vagina, its ears, and its nostrils, and he then sewed up all these openings with the magic powders inside. Certain of the ordinary magic powders such as *ũũmũ*, *njeehũ*, *ikanda*, and *ikũnja* were always used, and the specialist added to these some of his own special powders.

When evening approached, the *mũndũ mũgo* demanded a band of fully armed warriors, and to these men he gave instructions to drag this ewe sewn up with magic powders all along the edge of the forest beyond the farthest limits of the cultivated areas of that territorial unit. Having done this, they had to dig a deep hole in the edge of the forest and bury the body of the ewe in great secrecy. Next morning, the *mũndũ mũgo* demanded that a live dove be brought to him (he had warned the elders of this and they had made arrangements for a dove to be trapped). He then mixed a little of each of the above mentioned powders with some of his own special ones, and some water, and forced this liquid down the bird's throat. The dove, still alive, was tied fluttering to the branches of a tree over the principal path which led from the territorial unit concerned into the forest and towards Maasai country.

That same evening the *mũndũ mũgo* made a torch of *mũtei* wood, which he treated with his magic powders. After dark he lit it with fire made ceremonially from fire sticks, and then handed it to the band of armed warriors and instructed them to go again all along the boundary of their territorial unit, setting fire as they went to any dry tree stumps they came across, and drawing the lighted torch across all pathways which entered the forest from the territorial unit. When they had done so, they had to return home without once looking back in the **direction** from which they had come.

p.1155
Having thus provided magical protection for the territory, the *mũndũ mũgo* was given his fees, which consisted of skins, bars of Magadi soda, and one live sheep from each village in the territory concerned. This territory was then safe from Maasai raids for at least two years, or four planting seasons. If by any chance the Maasai warriors did attempt a raid on this area, it was believed that they would be very easily overcome, because as a result of these magic powders they would lose their power to resist.

Magical protection against locusts was provided mainly by one small family of *andũ ago* known as Mbarĩ a Gathirimũ. They were all specialists in general protective magic, and in addition they possessed the secret of protective magic against locusts, which however, died with them. It was said that when a locust plague threatened the country, if they were called in by any territorial unit and paid handsome fees, they could make protective magic which would ensure that the locust **swarms** would pass right over that territory.

A third kind of magical protection was that used to prevent the attacks of wild beasts such as leopards and lions on flocks and herds. In an area where such beasts had started periodic depredation on the stock, one of these specialists in protective magic was called in, and at once demanded that he be shown a footprint of the animals causing the trouble. The soil of this footprint was carefully collected and mixed with the specialist's own magic powders. Then four short lengths of *mũrigono* wood were cut, and each was dipped into the mixture of magic powders and soil. These three sticks, and the earth mixed with the magic powders, were taken into the thickets where the wild beasts were believed to lurk, and scattered about there. At the same time the *mũndũ mũgo* said aloud, "*Ndagarũra nyamũ ingĩũka kũrĩa ũhiũ*" (I turn back all wild animals that might come to devour the flocks).

Then he went back to the village and prepared a *kĩoho* (charm for protection). This charm was made with the following ingredients: a dead fire finch, a dead shrew, part of the carapace of a tortoise, a root of the wild banana (*ihĩndu*), some fallen leaves of the *mũrembu* tree, a frond of bracken, a tendril of the *mwaritha* plant in the form of a ring, and some of the magic powders called *ikũnja* and *ũũmũ*. These nine ingredients were charred together in a potsherd, and then

ground to a fine powder. This powder was bound up in a wild banana leaf tied with *mũriĩra* roots and put in a hole dug in the ground by the entrance to the homestead.

Late that night the *mũndũ mũgo* went out, carrying with him a wooden (p.1156) mortar, which he passed ten times round the hole containing the magic powders, before returning to the men's hut. After an interval he repeated this whole process, and then did so a third time before returning to bed for the rest of the night. Early next morning he poured some honey beer to the north, south, east, and west of the hole, at the same time calling upon the spirits of departed specialists in protective magic to give power to the powder.

Then he took the bundle out of the hole, put a little beer into it, and filled it with finger millet grain. The magic powder was then ready to use in making the charm. One end of the hole in an old wooden axe handle was sealed with beeswax, and this powder was put into the hole at the other end, which was then also sealed with beeswax. The axe handle with its magic powders was then put into a string bag, and tied up tightly with *mũriĩra* roots. This charm was given to the owner of the stock, who kept it in his hut, and from time to time used it to *thiũrũra* the flocks by passing it all round them. They were then safe from attacks by wild beasts.

Sometimes a *mũndũ mũgo* arrived with this powder already made, having kept a store of it in readiness, but the method of making it was the same, whether made in advance or made specially for the occasion.

Magic connected with Initiation Ceremonies

Certain members of the profession practised in the ordinary way as general practitioners, but at the same time specialised in the magical rites and ceremonies connected with initiation. As we have already described in Chapter 16, there were a number of things which a *mũndũ mũgo* had to be called in to do before an initiation ceremony started, as well as during and at the end of the ceremony. The principal acts and rites included setting up the grinding-stone to act as an altar, making a magic entrance to the homestead, making magic to prevent the woman who was the mother of the ceremonies from having a menstrual period during the ceremonies, mixing the magic powders and flour into the porridge (*ngima*) which each candidate had to eat, and purifying the homestead and its residents after the ceremonies were all over.

Commonly, those *andũ ago* who specialised in magic connected with initiation also specialised in magic connected with women's complaints such as irregular menstruation, excessive loss of blood at menstruation, and barrenness, all of which were treated in a magical rather than an empirical way.

p.1157

Andũ Ago as Herbal Specialists

Certain members of the profession did not undertake ordinary magical work, but specialised as herbalists, often paying considerable sums in sheep and goats to other herbal specialists to learn secrets of this branch of the profession. Such men were called in to work herbal cures and to advise on the best herbal remedies for almost all maladies, including those for which ordinary "household remedies" were well known. These *andũ ago a mĩtĩ* (medicine-men of the trees) were the nearest approach to genuine doctors that could be found in the profession, and many of them were very wise.

Andũ Ago as Specialists in the making of Charms

Although any *mũndũ mũgo* could make charms, and did in fact from time to time make charms for patients, there were specialists who were in great demand as charm makers, for almost every person had at least one, and commonly a large number. The ingredients varied considerably, but always included one or more of the recognised magic powders. Moreover, the rites and ceremonies connected with the making of charms varied but little. The following account based upon the information of a number of different individuals gives a clear idea of what was involved.

The head of a homestead who wished to have charms made for his family would brew beer in readiness, and get ready a number of objects to contain the finished charms. These would consist of horns of such animals as common duiker, dik-dik, and forest duiker, the neck ends of bottle gourds, and little leather bags made from he-goat hide and sewn with he-goat sinew. Having got ready a sufficient number of containers for the charms he required for his family, he was ready for the specialist in charm making, who would arrive with his magic powders and a quantity of *mũhũra wa njoore* (wax of the solitary bee).

When he arrived, the *mũndũ mũgo* demanded a banana tree stem, which was placed on the ground in the middle of the courtyard of the homestead. Then the *mũndũ mũgo* stuck his own Thomson's gazelle horn charm upright into one end of the banana tree stem, and some other charm of his (all *andũ ago* had more than one charm), at the other end of the stem. All along the stem in between these two charms he made little holes, into which he fitted the various containers that had been prepared for the charms he was to make.

p.1158
He then proceeded to make the charms required of him, mixing the necessary ingredients and putting them into their respective containers. One member of the family might want a charm for safety when travelling, another a charm to ensure the fertility of her gardens, another a charm for sexual fertility, another for protection from evil eye, and so on. In most cases several members of the family would take the opportunity to have more than one charm made.

When the *mũndũ mũgo* had at last filled all the containers with the appropriate mixtures of magic powders, he closcd up the mouth of cach container with his beeswax. Having sealed each charm, the *mũndũ mũgo* poured out *njeehũ*, *ikũnja*, and *ikanda* powders on to a stone, and proceeded to jab some *mũthuthi* thorns into the stone in the middle of these powders, after which he inserted them into the wax that sealed the charms. Large charms such as those in a duiker horn had nine such thorns put into them with formulae suitable to the purpose for which the charm was made, and smaller charms, such as little rectangular leather bags, had five thorns. No charm made thus for ordinary people had 18 thorns, this number being reserved for members of the *ũgo* profession.

The *mũndũ mũgo* then rubbed *ira* powder over each charm in turn and put it back in position on the banana tree stem. Next he summoned each of the males for whom he had prepared charms, and they had to come and squat down without touching their hands to the ground, seize their charm in their mouth, and with a flick of the head cast the charm over their right shoulders on to the ground behind. The women and children merely had to bend down and pick up their charms with their teeth and then drop them into their own cupped palms.

When every person had taken his charm thus, the *mũndũ mũgo* examined those charms that the males had thrown over their shoulders to see if they lay favourably, for charms for males were more important than charms for women and children, and a charm that had fallen in an unpropitious way was useless.

Each person was now instructed how to make their charm or charms, their own. The charm had to be held in the right hand in front of the body, spat upon once, passed round the head counter-clockwise, down under the right knee, then up to the person's face again. Then it had to be spat upon again and passed round the head clockwise, and down under the left knee, and to the front position again. The person then had to lick the charm, spit over his or her right shoulder, lick it again, spit over the left shoulder, and finally lick it once more and swallow the spittle. The charm was then put on to a necklace or waistband, and was potent to protect or otherwise help its owner.

p.1159
Before he would bless the charms, the charm maker had to be paid his fee of goat skins or bars of Magadi soda. The blessing was carried out by spitting beer and *kĩgombe* grass over the cupped hands of each person who had received one or more charms, to the accompaniment of suitable words of blessing, such as, "When you sleep with your wife, may you both be fruitful and fertile", "When you go out in the forest, may all wild animals flee from you", "When you go on a journey, may good fortune attend you", "When you are in danger from evil eye or from witchcraft, may your charm protect you".

Apart from charms of the type described above, most elders had a charm of a special type which was called *gĩthitũ kĩa rũthanju*, and which was worn in the form of a bracelet round the right wrist. This was made by placing some of each of the following five powders: *thiari*, *ũũmũ*, *mũcanjamũka*, *rũthuko*, and *kĩnona*, into a strip of he-goat leather about 8in. long and 1in. wide. This was then sewn along its length and at the ends. Then it was put round a man's right wrist and firmly bound round with leather tapes, so that it could be taken off only by taking it to **pieces.** The object of this charm was to ensure that a man's home flourished, that his stock increased and multiplied, and that good fortune came his way. It was particularly favoured by men who often travelled away from home in connection with their duties as council elders, for it ensured that all would be well during the owner's absence.

In Chapter 24, we have noted that there were special charms made for the leaders of the territorial warrior armies, which were carried when going raiding. This type of charm, which was made only by *andũ ago* who specialised in divination in connection with warfare and raiding, was made at the home of the *mũndũ mũgo* concerned, while all other charms were made at the home of the person who desired the charm.

Charms made by Private Individuals

Apart from those charms made by members of the *ũgo* profession, there were a certain number of objects recognised by the Kikuyu as having the properties of charms *per se*. People requiring such charms made them for themselves without having to call in a *mũndũ mũgo*. Among the more important of such charms, of which there were very many, were the following.

1. Fragments of very thick pottery which belonged to a remote prehistoric period were sometimes dug up by the Kikuyu when digging post holes or game pits. These fragments were called (p.1160) *nemathĩ*, and it was believed that a large rough bead, made by drilling a hole in such a fragment and turning it roughly to be circular shape, was a charm that would insure freedom from miscarriages and still-births. Women prone to such accidents, therefore, commonly wore this type of charm.

2. The horn of a three-horned chameleon was considered to be a potent charm against headaches.

3. The bones of the warthog and more especially the tusks of this animal were charms to ensure fertility.

4. A bit of aardvark skin was regarded as a potent charm against rheumatism.

5. Snake vertebrae threaded on to a leather thong and worn as an anklet were believed to be a charm against snake bite.

6. A little pendant made from *mũbĩngũ* wood, or bastard ebony, was regarded as a charm against snakes.

7. A wooden bead made from *mũrurĩ* wood was a charm against witchcraft (*ũrogi*).

8. If a man's father had formerly possessed an ivory arm ornament or an ivory snuff box, and this heirloom was lost or destroyed by fire, the man had to wear a small charm made of ivory. If he failed to do this, the fact that the heirloom had been lost would cause serious trouble to him and his family.

9. The claw of a lion or leopard worn as a pendant was a charm against these animals.

10. The claw of an aardvark worn as a pendant was a good luck charm (*kĩa mũnyaka*).

11. The beetle known as *kanogonogo* was said to be a potent charm to help a baby sleep peacefully.

12. A *kĩrago* bulb tied to a string round a child's neck was said to be a charm against "wind" and sickness.

The Fees of Andũ Ago

When a *mũndũ mũgo* was consulted as a diviner he was paid in advance. If it was not a specialised matter the fee was never very great, but consisted of a goat or sheep skin, a piece of pig iron, or a bar of Magadi soda. Thus he made his living, not by a few large fees, but a number of small fees each day, for if he had a good reputation he was consulted by a number of people daily. A specialist in divining also claimed but a (p.1161) small fee when he was consulted in connection with raids or trade journeys into Maasai country, but he was entitled to claim a further fee should the direction that he had suggested to the leader of the party prove correct, and should the party return with much wealth.

Fees for the making of protective magic, either for an individual or for a community, also had to be paid in advance, that is, before the magic became efficacious.

On the other hand, those members of the profession who specialised in cures, either by magic, by herbal remedies, or by a mixture of both, seldom demanded any fee in advance. The normal practice in such cases was for the "doctor" to give instructions that if the patient recovered as a result of his treatment, a fee of a fat ram or a virgin ewe would become payable, but that if his treatment failed he would claim no fee at all.

The normal procedure regarding fees for such treatment was for the *mũndũ mũgo* to give orders that the patient's hair was not to be cut or shaved until he had been called in to verify that the cure was satisfactory. Then he demanded his fee and put *ira* powder on the patient's hair, thus starting the shaving process, which was completed by the patient's mother, wife, or other female relative. A patient who had been treated by magical means and who had his or her head shaved before the fee had been paid was regarded as repudiating the debt and would—it was believed—automatically become subject to the adverse effects of those very magic powders that had brought about the cure.

This was a belief that all members of the profession studiously encouraged, as it was their only safeguard against non-payment. This also partly explains why a *mũndũ mũgo* dedicated his magic powders in public, and let everyone know that the powders were instructed to recoil with witchcraft (*ũrogi*) upon any ungrateful patients.

The members of the profession who made least out of their calling were those general practitioners in small villages who were not clever enough in their work to acquire really good reputations. Such men spent most of their time conducting purification ceremonies, and in the words of the Kikuyu, "*Tondũ kwao gũtiraaraga gũtari nyama*" (Their wealth is in the form of meat, for there will be

meat in their homes every night). This, of course, was due to the fact that the fee for conducting a purification ceremony was usually a large share of the meat of the animal slaughtered to provide stomach contents for the ceremony, but no other fee was payable, except in some cases the skin of the animal so slaughtered.

p.1162

Perquisites of Andũ Ago

Those members of the profession of *ũgo* who were specialists in protective magic and in divining for warfare and raiding had an exclusive right to leopard and lion skins, and any person who killed one of these animals had to take the skin to such a *mũndũ mũgo*. (In the case of a lion with a mane they did not have to give up the mane). Leopard skins so acquired were used to make ceremonial cloaks worn on very special occasions, while lion skins were used as mats on which to divine. Any person not qualified to use such skins and known to be using them in secret was punished by these specialists, who made magic that would cause a lion or leopard to kill that person.

The Treatment of Diseases and other Complaints by Magical Means

Magical Treatment for Failure of the Menses

If either an adult girl or a woman who was still of childbearing age should for any reason other than conception fail to have a normal menstrual period, her father, or in the case of a married woman, her husband, called in a *mũndũ mũgo* to cure her.

In the ordinary course of events the general practitioner who normally dealt with the troubles of that family, that is, the family doctor, was called in, but sometimes the man said frankly that he was not skilled in the treatment of this particular thing and he advised that some other *mũndũ mũgo* be sent for. There were several distinct and well recognised ways of treating this complaint, which was usually psychical rather than physical.

The *mũndũ mũgo* instructed the man who had called him in to have sugar-cane beer prepared on a certain day, and in the afternoon of that day he came, bringing with him his string bag containing all his magic powders. In addition to his ordinary magic powders, he brought a small gourdful of the magic powder known as *kĩoho* (one for tying up, or making secure), which was described in connection with specialists in magical protection. This powder he either prepared specially for the occasion, or else, if he did not know the formula, he bought a quantity of it from one of the specialists in protective magic, who nearly always (p.1163) kept a large supply. For one small gourdful (about 2 oz) he had to pay a goat skin.

Having arrived at the homestead of the girl or woman he was going to treat, he went into the bush to collect certain necessities. These consisted of several roots of the plant called *kĩhĩnga*, roots and stems of the creeper called *mũriĩra*, and some leaves of the *mũtũndũ* tree. Having collected these, he returned to the homestead and demanded that a little hair be shaved from the front and back of the head and above both ears of the patient. This hair he put on a *mũtũndũ* leaf with some of the *kĩoho* magic powder. Then he had nail parings cut from the patient's right and left thumbs and right and left middle fingers. He also asked for parings from her right and left big toes and right and left little toes. Next he demanded that the patient's skin garments be thoroughly scraped with a knife, and all the dirt and grease from them was added to the pile of hair, nail parings, and *kĩoho* powder. Then the *mũndũ mũgo violently* twisted three *kĩhĩnga* roots, split them in the middle, and into each of these split cracks he inserted some of the mixture of hair, nail parings, powder, and dirt. These three roots were then laid aside for a *moment* while he treated three *mũriĩra* roots in the same way.

The three *kĩhĩnga* roots were then knotted once, and the first was tied round the left ankle of the patient, the second round the waist of an old woman who was well past childbearing age, and the third round the head of that roof support that was nearest to the men's hut in the hut where the patient slept. The *mũndũ mũgo* next took the three *mũriĩra* roots, and these he wrapped up separately in *mũtũndũ* leaves, and tied up in separate bundles with *mũriĩra* creeper stems. Of these three bundles, one was buried in a hole in the ground by the entrance to the homestead, one was put into a hole in a hollow tree in the bush, and one the *mũndũ mũgo* himself put into his bag containing his gourds of magic powders. The *mũndũ mũgo* then asked for the leather thong with which his patient tied her skin skirt round her waist, and he tied a knot in this, enclosing in the middle of the knot some of the hair, nail parings, powder, and dirt. He then gave her back her thong and told her to tie it round her waist again and sleep with it there.

He had now made and used seven objects containing this evil mixture of *kĩoho* powder, hair, nail parings, and dirt from her cloak, all of which were dangerous things. *Kĩoho* was a powder normally used to prevent menstrual flow and to take away people's normal functions. It was used by the *mũndũ mũgo* who prepared a homestead for initiation ceremonies in order to prevent the mother of the initiation from having a menstrual period during the ceremonies, and it was also used by those who worked in protective magic to deprive wild animals and enemies (p.1164) of their normal functions. It was thus a dangerous powder. The other three ingredients were all things which an enemy could use to make witchcraft (*ũrogi*) if he or she wished to harm the patient and prevent her from having her normal menstrual periods. Thus the seven object contained the ingredients of all the things that might have been used, unknown to anyone, to bring about the state of health that the *mũnd mũgo* was trying to cure.

There was, too, a very definite significance in the seven places where the objects were put for the night. One was on the patient's ankle, as the cause of her trouble might be within herself. The second was on an old woman past childbearing, since some enemy may have, by *witch*craft, caused and willed that this girl or young woman be like an *old* woman, past childbearing. The third was inside the hut where the patient slept, in case the cause of the trouble was due to the anger of some member of the household. The fourth was by the entrance to the homestead in the ground, in case the cause was the anger of departed spirits who lived underground. The fifth was in a hollow tree in case the cause lay with the anger of the deity. The sixth was in the bag of the *mũndũ mũgo* with his magic powders, in case by any chance the cause of the trouble lay in some action of a *mũndũ mũgo* who accidentally, or deliberately, had used *kĩoho* powder against the patient and so withheld her menses. The seventh and last was in the patient's leather waist thong which was now round her waist again, and it signified that whatever the cause of the trouble, the centre of the trouble was in the woman or girl's womb.

Having disposed of these seven objects in this way, the *mũndũ mũgo* went to his home for the night and returned again early next morning. He went first of all straight into the hut where the patient had slept, and hung his bag of magic powders on the roof support by the *kĩhĩnga* root that had been there all night. He then asked the man who had called him in to treat the patient to draw him a gourd cupful of beer and mix it with finger millet grain. This was handed to the *mũndũ mũgo*, who poured it into his bag of magic powders, at the same time praying to the deity and to the spirits of all departed *andũ ago* to bless him in his work and to make him successful this day.

He then had the gourd cup refilled with beer and finger millet grain, and having left instructions that a winnowing tray was to be put into the middle of the courtyard, and that the old woman past

childbearing was to be summoned, he and the man who had called him in went off to the tree where one of the magic bundles was hidden.

Having arrived at the tree, the *mũndũ mũgo* addressed the deity, Ngai, saying, "If by any chance it is You who have caused this woman (p.1165) to lose her normal functions, now, since the evil magic has been in Your keeping all night, grant that her misfortune may be removed". He then poured some of the beer and grain into the hole in the tree, withdrew the magic bundle, anointed it with *ira* powder, and handed it to the woman's husband (or father if she was an unmarried girl). They then went back towards the homestead, and having reached the entrance, they stopped at the place where one of the other handles of evil had been buried overnight.

Here the *mũndũ mũgo* addressed the departed spirits saying, "If by any chance it is you who have caused the patient her trouble, now, since you have had this magic with you all night, release her from her misfortune". He then poured out beer and finger millet grain on the ground round the place, dug out the bundle, anointed it with *ira* powder, and went into the courtyard. Here the two bundles so far collected were put on to the winnowing tray. Meanwhile, the old woman past childbearing had arrived, and the *mũndũ mũgo* poured some *ira* powder into her left palm and told her to anoint her navel and her *pudenda* with it. This done, she removed the magic root from round her waist, put some *ira* powder on it, and placed it on the winnowing tray with the others. She was then given a drink of beer, after which the *mũndũ mũgo* went to the hut, took down the magic root from the roof support, and carried this and the bundle that was in his bag of magic out into the courtyard. Lastly, he instructed the patient to remove the root that was round her left ankle, and the leather thong that was round her waist. This last he ceremonially unknotted and handed back to her, after anointing it with *ira* powder.

The six roots—three of which were tied in leaves—were then all carefully untied, and those that were wrapped in leaves were unwrapped. All were placed in a potsherd and set to char over a fire in the courtyard. When the whole had been thoroughly charred, the *mũndũ mũgo* took cold water in a small half-gourd, and solemnly poured the water over the charred remains, saying as he did so, "*Ndahoria ngoma ĩrĩa yohete mũka ũyũ; ndahoria rũhuho rũmũthũkĩtie; ndahoria kĩrĩa gĩothe kĩmũreheire ũũrũ ũyũ*" (I make cold the spirit that has tied up this woman; I make cold the wind that has caused her this catastrophe; I make cold whatever thing it may be that has brought this evil upon her).

This done, he poured some beer into the mixture of water and charred remains and stirred the whole into a black liquid mess, adding **so**me of each of the following four magic powders as he stirred: *thiari*, *rũthuko*, *mũcanjamũka*, and *kĩnoria*. He then called upon his patient's mother—or if she was married, one of her co-wives or her mother-in-law—and ordered that her head be carefully shaved. When this had (p.1166) been done, he summoned the patient to come and stand before him with nothing on but her leather skirt, which she had to draw up so that it covered only her *pudenda* and her buttocks.

The *mũndũ mũgo* then anointed her breasts, her navel, and the part of her abdomen that was over the uterus, with this black mixture, and handed her the potsherd and told her to anoint herself all over from head to foot with the rest. He supervised this operation and then sent her to her hut and told her to wait until the mixture had dried, after which she was to brush it off with her hands.

Meanwhile, while she was thus engaged, the *mũndũ mũgo* called for the beer that had been brewed on the previous day, and was formally presented with his share by the father or husband of the patient, and the assembled people proceeded to drink their share and go their ways.

When the assembled people had departed, the patient came out into the courtyard again, bringing her stool. Some red ochre was then put on to the seat of the stool, ground to powder, and mixed with castor oil and some of each of the following magic powders: *thiari*, *mũcanjamũka*, *kĩnoria*, and *rũthuko*. The *mũndũ mũgo* then anointed the patient with this red ochre mixture as he had anointed her before, and told her to complete the process.

While she was doing so he called for a half-gourd, into which he put some beer, and to which he added some of each of the above mentioned magic powders. He then roughly shaped a piece of *mũkenia* wood into a *kĩbĩri* (stirring implement). When the patient had covered herself and her clothing with red ochre, she was made to sit on her stool in front of the *mũndũ mũgo*. He then placed the half-gourd containing the beer and magic powders on her thighs as near to her *pudenda* as possible, and told her to hold it there, while he squatted in front of her and stirred the mixture, at the same time repeating the following formula a number of times, "*Ndabĩra maambura maku marĩa morire. Kaĩ nĩmo ndathuka mahiũhe*" (I stir up your menses that have been lost to you. Surely I summon them that they may come upon you speedily). The whole performance was very solemn. Then he passed the half-gourd once round the patient's head, after which she was made to drink it and retire.

So great was the psychological effect of this whole ceremony that in the vast majority of cases it had the desired effect within two or three days, even if the patient had been several months without having a period. Where the cases were physical and not psychical, there might be no result, and the *andũ ago* all admitted to a percentage of failures, which they said were because the deity was not willing to bless their efforts.

A second form of treatment was sometimes used when an adult girl (p.1167) or married woman failed to have her menses. The *mũndũ mũgo* who had been called in to treat the patient demanded a ram for slaughter, which he, the patient, and her father or husband, took into the bush to a *mũthakwa* or *mũkenia* shrub. Meanwhile, the fire in the patient's hut was put **out.** Having arrived at the bush, the *mũndũ mũgo* and the patient's father or husband held the ram in front of the bush and prayed first to God saying, "If the cause of this woman's failure to have her menses is Your anger, we pray to You to release her from her affliction. We have brought this ram as a sacrifice to You and to the spirits of the departed".

Then they both prayed to the departed spirits, saying, "If you who are now in the ground are the cause of this woman's trouble, we pray to you to release her and give her back her normal menses". The ram was then suffocated, and when its blood was drawn off some of it was poured at the foot of the bush as an offering to both God and to the departed spirits. The joints were then cut up in the correct way, and from every joint small pieces were laid on one side on *mũthakwa* leaves. The rest of the meat was set to roast, and while it was roasting, the *mũndũ mũgo* took his bag of magic powders and went down with his patient to a place by the stream where he knew there was a small islet. It was important that this be a small islet, which was called *mwĩa*, and not a *gĩthama* (an island), which was larger and would not serve the purpose.

The *mũndũ mũgo* and his patient crossed to the islet, and here he dug a shallow hole right in the middle of it, which he lined with clay to make a watertight basin. On two sides of the islet the *mũndũ mũgo* constructed very rough symbolic huts of *mũcatha* and *mũgere* sticks, roughly thatched with *ithanjĩ* rushes. These represented, respectively, the hut in which the patient had undergone her initiation period, and her mother's hut.

He then filled the basin with water from that part of the river which was flowing on the side of the island farthest from the patient's home, and put into this water some of each of these seven magic powders: *mũgoco*, *ũũmũ*, *ng'ondu*. *mũcanjamũka*, *rũthuko*, *thiari*, and *kĩnoria*. With this mixture he ceremonially cleansed the girl (*tahĩkia*). While he was doing this, she squatted first in one of the rough huts and then in the other. This was done so that whether the cause of the trouble was due to something that went wrong during the initiation ceremonies, or something that went wrong in her own home, she would be purified from its effects upon her.

Having finished this purification, he made a little channel to let the mixture in the basin drain out into that part of the stream from which it was taken. As the water flowed out of the basin, he said, "May this (p.1168) woman's menses flow as this water flows". He then sealed up the basin again and filled it with water from that part of the divided stream that was nearest to the patient's home, and he repeated the whole process. This done, he crossed over to the bank nearest the patient's home and then told her to cross over to him. When she reached the bank he anointed her temples with *ira* powder. The two of them then made their way back to the place where the ram had been slaughtered.

While the two had been at the stream, the women from the patient's home had come to the place where the animal had been slaughtered, bringing samples of every type of grain and bean. When the *mũndũ mũgo* and his patient arrived back at the place of sacrifice, the meat of the animal, which by then had been roasted, was eaten by those present, including one or two council elders who had been invited to come and share it. Then the bones, the leaves on which the meat had been cut up, and all the raw pieces of all the joints, were laid at the foot of the bush. All the samples of grain and beans and also some sugar-cane juice which had been put into hollow tubes of castor oil stem to represent beer gourds, were then added to this pile. All these offerings were for God and the departed spirits, so that if they were the cause of the patient's trouble they might be pleased and withdraw their curses.

The whole party then went back to the homestead. There the *mũndũ mũgo* made the patient sit down on a stool outside her hut (where the fire had been put out earlier in the day). He placed the "female" part of his fire stick (*gĩka*) across her thighs as near to her *pudenda* as possible. He then used the "male" fire stick to drill for fire, and as he did so he said, "I drill fire, I drill so that the menses of this woman shall come, and come quickly, that she may be fertile". When at last he got his fire (this took about 30 seconds on an average) he lit some banana bark fibre and added to it some of each of the seven magic powders used at the river. This was then taken into the hut and a new fire was lit there in place of the old one that had been put out. The ceremony was then over, but on the following day the patient's head had to be shaved. It was said that in a very, very great number of cases the patient's menses started within a week.

Sometimes when the menses of a woman or a girl failed, the husband or father, after consultation with a diviner, came to the conclusion that the cause of the trouble was a deathbed curse by one of the co-wives of the patient's mother, who for some reason had been angered. If the cause had been diagnosed as such, then neither of the two treatments above described were employed, but instead the following one.

A *mũndũ mũgo*, having been told of the diagnosis based upon divination, instructed the patient's father, even if she was married, to procure (p.1169) a live chameleon, a live frog, a live mole rat, and a live water beetle. When he had acquired these things, he was to summon the *mũndũ mũgo* to his homestead, for even if the woman was married she had to be treated at her father's homestead.

The father acquired these things as soon as possible, and then called in the *mũndũ mũgo*. Having arrived with his bag of magic powders, the *mũndũ mũgo* demanded a virgin ewe for slaughter, and while this was being slaughtered, he set to work with one or two helpers to prepare things.

In the courtyard he had two very large holes dug about a foot apart, each of which had to be large enough for a person to get into easily. When the holes had been dug, the *mũndũ mũgo* made a tunnel to join them, which had to be large enough to allow for the passage of a person. When the holes had been dug, he went out into the bush and cut two withies, one of *mwaritha* wood and one of *mũrigono*. He bound each of these into a small oval hoop, using *mũriĩra* creepers to do so. Then, still using *mũriĩra* creepers, he made a rough open basket of the type called *rũgara* with these two hoops as the main structure.

While he was doing this, he sent the patient to the stream to fetch a *kĩnya* gourd of water, and at the same time, she was to collect some dry brushwood as fuel. When she returned with these she had to leave the fuel outside the entrance of the homestead, but bring the water in and hand it to the *mũndũ mũgo*. Then the *mũndũ mũgo* cut a long strip of the skin of the ewe and also a long strip of its abdominal lining, and these he pegged out on the bridge over the tunnel that joined the two holes. He then placed a green banana leaf at the bottom of the tunnel between the two holes.

This done, he poured the water brought from the river into the leaf, pouring half from each entrance to the tunnel. Next he tied *mũriĩra* roots to the live frog, the live chameleon, the live mole rat, and the water beetle, which was wrapped in *mũtũndũ* leaves. On the other end of the roots to which these creatures were tied he fixed one foot of the slaughtered ewe.

Into the water in the banana leaf in the tunnel he then placed some of the stomach contents of the ewe, together with some of each of the following magic powders: *mũgoco*, *ũũmũ*, *rũthuko*, *thiari*, *kĩnoria*, *mũcanjamũka*, and *ng'ondu*. In between the two strips pegged out on the bridge over the tunnel he sprinkled *ũũmũ* powder or *ng'ondu* powder. Then he fetched four sticks of *mũcatha* wood and he was ready to commence operations.

He ordered the patient to get right down into the hole nearest the huts, with her back to them, and he himself got into the hole nearest the homestead entrance. Then he proceeded to perform the purification (p.1170) ceremony of *gũtahĩkia*. He dipped one of the *mũcatha* sticks into the water mixed with magic powders which was in the banana leaf in the bottom of the tunnel. He passed it through the tunnel and touched it to the girl's lips, saying as he did so, "I command you to emit the curses of the dead that are causing your troubles". Then he stood up in his hole and threw his stick over the fence of the homestead. The girl then stood up in her hole, and he repeated this act with a second *mũcatha* stick, but this time over the top of the bridge instead of through the tunnel.

This done, the *mũndũ mũgo* and the patient changed places, and he repeated the *tahĩkia* process for her, both through the tunnel and over the bridge. This time he used the foot of the ewe held with a *mũcatha* stick, and each time threw away only the stick. The creatures above mentioned symbolized the spirits of the dead who were underground, and since they were attached to the foot, it was they, the departed spirits, who were in theory performing the act of purification on the patient.

When the four *mũcatha* sticks had all been used and thrown away, the *mũndũ mũgo* laid aside the foot of the ewe and told the patient to bend down and wash her face in the water in the banana leaf. This done, he ordered her to crawl through the tunnel, and as she began to do so, he got out of his hole. As the girl emerged from the tunnel into the hole nearest the huts, the *mũndũ mũgo* gave her

a little *ira* powder to lick, and also rubbed some on her temples. Then, when she stood up in the hole, he rubbed some *ira* powder on her throat, navel, and both her big toes. This symbolized her purification. She then climbed out of the hole and was given some of each of the seven magic powders to swallow, after which she was told to stand aside for a while. The *mũndũ mũgo* then entered the hole nearest the huts, pushed the foot to which the four creatures were attached into the tunnel, climbed out of that hole and into the other one, and pulled the foot through the tunnel.

Meanwhile, the girl's father had put bits of meat cut from each joint into a rough basket, and also samples of the various grains and beans in the homestead, as well as bits of hollow castor oil stem filled with sugarcane juice to represent beer.

The ewe's foot and the four creatures were then attached to this basket, and the *mũndũ mũgo* and the girl's father carried it out of the homestead, dangling the ewe's foot so that it touched the ground from time to time. When they reached the entrance they attached the bundle of fuel to the basket and went on into the bush until they reached a *mũthakwa* shrub. This was called "taking the spirits (as represented by the four creatures) into the bush so that they would no longer trouble (p.1171) the patient". At the *mũthakwa* shrub both the *mũndũ mũgo* and the girl's father prayed to the spirits of the departed to urge the dead woman who had put the curse on the patient to remove it, and they promised them more beer next day. Then they left the basket at the foot of the shrub, with all the offerings in it, the four creatures, and the fuel, and returned to the homestead to cat the roasted meat of the ewe, after which they filled up the hole and tunnel completely.

Before the *mũndũ mũgo* departed, he went out and dug up some *gakarakũ* roots. These he put on the patient's stool and brushed with *mũgoco* and *thiari* magic powders. This made a brilliant red dye, which he rubbed into the patient's sacrum, on to her *pudenda*, and on to her breasts, at the same time saying, "We demand that the blood flow that has been lost shall return quickly". The girl then anointed her whole body with this dye. The ceremony was then over, except that next morning the patient's father had to pour out beer for the spirits as promised. It was claimed that within a few days the menses would start again.

The explanation of the use of the mole rat, the chameleon, the frog, and the water beetle to represent the spirits of the dead in this ceremony is interesting. The mole rat lived underground like the spirits of the dead, and it symbolized spirits in general; the chameleon was connected with death and also with spirits in Kikuyu mythology, hence its inclusion; the frog was regarded as a symbol of a female spirit, and it represented, in particular, the co-wife of the patient's mother, who had been diagnosed as the chief cause of the trouble. As for the water beetle, its significance was linked with its name (*ŋjũrũri*—the creature that wanders about), and its association with water. The water beetle was held to symbolize wandering strangers, and it was surmised that possibly the cause of the patient's trouble was that at some point she had refused a drink of water to a wandering stranger, and that, in consequence, he had cursed her on his deathbed and so brought about her condition.

In the case of the above described ceremonies, the only fees that the *mũndũ mũgo* received in advance were the beer in the first case and the meat in the second, but if his treatment was successful and the menses came, he received as a fee one ram and one virgin ewe. If the treatment failed, he received no further fee at all. This fact in itself is indicative of the degree of success of these ceremonies, for if he failed, the *mũndũ mũgo* had wasted a whole day and much magic powder, which was expensive and troublesome to make. The *andũ ago* were so certain of a high percentage of successes, however, that they had no hesitation in saying they would take no fee unless they were successful.

p.1172
In the event of a woman failing to conceive, whether due to the complete failure of the menses or some other cause, and was diagnose by a *mũndũ mũgo* as being barren, she was treated as described Chapter 14.

Magical Treatment for Excessive Blood Flow in Menstrual Periods

If a young married woman suffered from excessive flows of blood during menstruation, her husband consulted a *mũndũ mũgo*, taking the girl's father (or classificatory father) with him when he went. The *mũndũ mũgo* consulted his divining gourd, and usually said that the trouble was due to anger on the part of the girl's own family, and gave instructions for the following magical ceremony to be performed, which, however, he did not take part in himself. It was the girl's father who was made responsible for arranging and carrying out the ceremony of *gwĩkĩra mũka ngũbitũ* (to put the *ngũbitũ* on a woman), but he had to follow carefully all the instructions given him.

The woman's father and husband together fixed a day for the ceremony, and on the day before, the women's husband had some sugarcane beer brewed and had *njahi* beans cooked and bulrush millet gruel prepared. He also arranged to collect the following necessary materials: some bark of the shrub called *mũkangarithi*, some bark from a *mũgumo* tree's hanging roots, some fibre from a bit of green banana bark of the *mũtahato* species, and some sinew from a ram that had been slaughtered, as distinct from one that had died naturally. These four ingredients were used to make a ceremonial cord upon which the following objects were threaded, which also had to be collected and supplied by the woman's husband: a tuber of the plant called *kĩrago kĩa rũgongo* pierced with a hole to make it like a bead, a similar tuber of *kĩrago gĩa kĩanda*, a piece of a *mũthakwa* shrub made into a bead, a piece of *mũkenia* wood made into a bead, two white beads, and two dark blue beads.

Early on the morning fixed for the start of the ceremony, the girl's father, her mother, and three of her paternal uncles and their senior wives, came to the husband's home to represent the girl's family, and to carry out the magical ceremony to purify and cure her as the *mũndũ mũgo* had directed. When they arrived, stools were brought out for them, and the four men and the four women sat down in a row with (p.1173) the patient's father and mother in the middle facing her hut, the men on father's right, and the women on the father's left. Then the patient's husband brought out a little beer for them in a drinking horn and a drinking gourd cup, and they all blessed themselves by spitting a little on their chests, after which they gave orders for the beer that had been brewed to be poured off. When the patient's husband and a friend whom he had called in had brought this out, they brought out a winnowing tray on which were laid the twelve objects enumerated above, and they placed this tray in front of the patient's father and mother. The patient now came out of her hut and sat by her doorway to watch and listen to the proceedings.

The patient's father then twisted a piece of string from the bark, sinew, and banana fibre by the process called *kuogotha* (see Chapter 9). He first twisted a short length of about 3 in, and as he did so he said, "*Ndogothera mwana ũũru ũtũire ũmũrũmĩrĩire*" (I twist for my child the evil that has so long followed her). Then he untwisted this length and said, "*Ndogothora ũũru ũcio*" (I untwist that evil). Then he retwisted it again, saying this time, "*Rĩu ndamuogothera maambura marĩa mega*" (Now I twist for her menses that are good).

He then handed the string to the next man and he likewise twisted, untwisted, and twisted again a further length of string, uttering the same formula. When each of the five men had thus twisted a

length, it was handed to the patient's mother and then to each of the other three women, who all acted in like manner, thus making a piece of string about a yard long.

This was then handed to the patient's father, who threaded the *mũthakwa* wood bead on to the string, saying as he did so, "*Ndahakĩra mwana ngũbitũ ya kũrũmia maambura macio moru matigwo marĩa ma mwana*" (I thread on (this bead) for my child to make a *ngũbitũ* to hold fast the evil menstrual flow and leave only the menses that are for children). He then handed the string to his wife, and she threaded on a dark blue bead, repeating the same formula. Then the string was handed to the uncle sitting next to the father, who threaded on the *mũkenia* wood bead, after which his wife threaded a white bead. The next uncle threaded the head made from the tuber of *kĩrago kĩa rũgongo*, and his wife another blue bead, and the last two put on respectively the bead from the *kĩrago gĩa kĩanda* tuber and the last white bead. This string with eight beads on it was then put back on the winnowing tray.

Two half-gourds of water were brought out, one called *maĩ ma inegene* (water of bickering complaints), and the other *maĩ ma gũkira* (p.1174) (water of silence). From the half-gourd with the "water of bickering complaints", the patient's father took a mouthful, rinsed out his mouth, and spat it out saying, "*Ndabucabucĩra ũũru wothe ũthũkĩtie mwana*" (I rinse out all the evil that is damaging the child). He then took the "water of silence" and drank a mouthful saying, "*Ndanyua mũrĩo, ndakiria ndĩa ĩo*" (I drink sweetness, I make silent the thing which was consuming her). Each of the other three men and each woman in turn then did likewise.

Next each of the eight people rubbed *ira* powder on the roofs of their mouths, on their throats, on their chests, and on their navels, and as they did so they said, "*Twakundũra ũũru wothe*" (We untie all evil). All together, they then rubbed *ira* powder on to the string of eight beads which they had prepared.

This done, the husband of the patient brought out a horn drinking vessel, a gourd cup, and a *gĩtete* bottle gourdful of beer. Each of the men took a mouthful from the horn and each of the women from the gourd cup, and standing in front of the patient, into whose palms the beaded string (*ngũbitũ*) had been placed, they simultaneously all spat their mouthfuls of beer on to the string in her hands. As they did so they addressed it saying, "We bless you, the *ngũbitũ;* hold fast the bad flow of blood but do not impede the normal flow". Then the patient's father, with all the others holding on to his clothing to associate themselves with him, passed the beaded string three times round the patient, and the fourth time slipped it over her head and down to her waist, where she was told to tie it. He then emptied a gourd cupful of beer over her head, and emptied what remained of "the water of silence" over her ankles.

When the ceremony had thus been completed, beer was brought out and all who had assembled began drinking it, eating the *njahĩ* beans, and consuming gruel that the husband had had prepared. The patient's husband then gave the eight delegates of the patient's family a virgin ewe, and they departed, ululating as they went.

Magical Treatment of other Illnesses

As we have already seen in Chapter 21, although herbal remedies were widely used by the Kikuyu, certain ailments were believed to be due to such supernatural causes as the anger of departed spirits and the breaking of religious and other laws, and these could not be cured by (p.1175) herbal treatment alone, but required religious and magical treatment as well. The religious treatment consisted of propitiating the spirits whose anger was causing the sickness by making sacrifices for

them. The role of the *mũndũ mũgo* was first to diagnose the cause of the trouble by divining, and then to conduct a purification ceremony after the spirits had been appeased.

Quite apart, however, from this aspect of the magical treatment of disease, there were certain ailments which the *mũndũ mũgo* who was a general practitioner, treated by means of his own magic powders. This method of treatment, which was used chiefly in such matters as headaches, toothaches, and unaccountable swellings on the body, was called *kũhuha*, which means literally, to blow. In actual fact, however, blowing did not come into the treatment at all, which consisted of making the patient certain charms, and then spitting on him violently, after which he was anointed with specific magic powders, which in some cases were put on to the surface of the skin and in other cases applied into cuts made in the flesh.

It should be noted that the power to cure disease by the method of *kũhuha* was not confined to qualified *andũ ago*, and that a certain number of ordinary people also obtained good reputations as *ahuhi*, or people who could cure by this method.

The *andũ ago* in South Kikuyu did not commonly use sleight-of-hand in removing swellings and other ills from their patients' bodies, but from time to time a *mũndũ mũgo* learned such tricks from other areas and made use of them, appearing to draw forth pebbles, frogs, beads, and insects from his patient's body, and then assuring him that this was the cause of his trouble and that he would now get well. However, such methods were not in favour with the main body of the profession, and those who used them were regarded as quacks.

The faith of the patient in the ability of the *mũndũ mũgo* to cure him was absolutely essential, and when that faith was present the cure was very frequently speedily achieved.

Magic Powders and their Ingredients

Apart from magic powders invented by specialists and used and known only to themselves, there were 18 named and well recognised magic powders used by members of the profession, but by no means were all (p.1176) of them to be found in any one man's outfit. The ingredients of most these magic powders were known to the majority of the profession, but in some cases, as for example the powder known as *kĩoho*, the ingredients were known only to specialists, who made large quantities and sold it to the other members of the profession as required.

Ira

This was a white powder purchased by the Southern Kikuyu from members of the tribe who lived near Mount Kenya. It looked like diatomite, and in some cases genuine diatomite was used as a substitute for it; however, the genuine *ira* of the worker in magic was not diatomite, but a white earth obtained from the vicinity of a hill known as *Kĩrĩma kĩa Ira*. There was a deposit there of white coloured clay, which was boiled for a long time until it purified to a dazzling whiteness. This white clay was then dried and brought to South Kikuyu in lumps, where a small lump about the size of a man's fist was sold for one ewe. *Ira* powder was essential in almost all magic ceremonies, and every *mũndũ mũgo* possessed some. It was also used by private individuals, and the head of every household always had some in his hut for use in family purification ceremonies.

Ũũmũ

This was a red powder made from the bark of the roots of the flowering creeper called *mũtanda-mbogo*. The outer surface of the roots was scraped off carefully, and then set to dry, before being ground to a fine red powder. The purest *ũũmũ* powder had no other ingredients, but sometimes

bark from the roots of the *mũthithĩi* plant was similarly treated and mixed with *mũtanda-mbogo* powder.

Rũthuko

This was a yellowish powder made from the bark of the roots of the plant known as *mũhukũũra*. This plant grew wild, but it was also cultivated, and before a man could dig up some of its roots he had to pour beer and finger millet grain at the foot of the plant. The roots were then peeled, and the whole of the bark was pounded to a pulp in a wooden mortar, dried, and then ground to a fine powder. Some *andũ ago* added (p.1177) the roots of *mũgere* to the roots of *mũhukũũra* in preparing *rũthuko*, but this was not a universal practice.

This powder was not only made for use by the *andũ ago*, but was sold in large quantities to the Maasai, among whom it was in very great demand.

Kĩnoria

This was a whitish powder, the ingredients of which were the following cultivated food plants: a cassava root, a yam root (which had to be the first root dug from that particular plant), a *mũndoro* sweet potato root, a green banana of the *mũtahato* species from a newly planted stool, a root of edible arum, a stem of sugar-cane, a handful of bulrush millet, a handful of pigeon peas, a handful of sorghum corn, and a handful of *njahĩ* beans. All these ingredients were put together into a wooden mortar, crushed, and dried in the sun, after which they were ground to a fine powder between two grinding-stones.

Mũcanjamũka

The only ingredient in this powder was leaves of the plant of the same name, which were beaten in a pestle while moist, dried in the sun, and then ground to a fine brown powder.

Mũũnga

The ingredients of this powder were the following: sweepings from many dancing fields (that is, dead leaves, bits of sugar-cane peel, banana leaves, and anything else left about after a big dance had been held), handfuls of leaves from stream and river banks where sudden floods had left a lot of stranded rubbish, dry cattle dung and sheep droppings from salt licks where the cattle from all over the country came together from time to time, and chips from many log bridges all over the country (which would have been used by many people, and therefore have been touched by the feet of untold numbers of people from far and wide). It should be noted that each of these ingredients had one thing in common—they were things brought together to one place from a wide area, or else things that had been touched by people from far and wide.

p.1178
Having been carefully collected, these ingredients were all put in potsherds over a fire, charred, and ground to a black powder.

Thiari

The chief ingredients in this powder were the charred remains of tick birds and their nests. To these were added the same ingredients as already described for the powder called *mũũnga*. In other words, the powder called *thiari* was really nothing more than *mũũnga* powder plus the charred remains of tick birds and their nests, and men who had succeeded in getting hold of the latter did

not have a gourd of *mũũnga* at all in their outfit, while those who could not get these things used *mũũnga* powder instead of *thiari*.

Kĩoho

The ingredients of this powder and the way in which it was made have been described already in that section of this chapter which deals with protective magic.

Njeehũ

The following were the requisite ingredients for making this powder: a quail, a dove of the species called *ndutura*, a swallow, a bat, a small piece of lion skin, a bit of leopard skin, a small piece of mica, a small stump from a public pathway against which a man had stubbed his foot, a piece of *mũtĩ mũũmũ* wood, an arrowshaft, and a piece of wood from a log which bridged a river. These ingredients were put together into a large piece of potsherd and set over a fire to burn until they were cinder and ash, whereupon they were ground to a powder.

Ikũnja

The principal ingredient in this powder was the plant that had the same name, which is a small ground creeper that grows in rocky places. To this were added some fronds of bracken (*rũthirũ*), some tendrils of *mwaritha* wood, a whole *gĩtũũhia* plant, and a dove of the species called *ndirahũgĩ*. These were charred in a potsherd and then ground to a fine black powder.

p.1179
Ikanda

The following were the ingredients in *ikanda* powder: a chameleon, some mica, a desiccated puff-adder, a desiccated cobra, a small black water bird known as *karuma-ndihũ*, a shrew, and a zebra rat. These things were all charred in a potsherd and ground to a powder.

Ngoma

The following were the ingredients in *ngoma* powder: fallen leaves of the *mũrembu* tree, a disused tree ants' nest taken from a *mũrembu* tree, fallen leaves from a *mũtũndũ* tree, a tendril of a yam shrub that hung down and swept the ground whenever there was a wind (making a mark upon the earth below as it swung), some of the earth from this mark, a leaf of a sugar-cane plant that hung down in the same way as the yam tendril, some earth from the place thus marked by the sugar-cane leaf, and some tubers of *mũtharia ndundu*. These ingredients were all charred together and ground to a powder.

Mũgũthũkũ

The chief ingredient in this powder was the bark of the plant of the same name, to which was added *mũthĩga* bark, *njaani* bark, and some *mũgaya-ng'ũndũ* roots. These ingredients were all pounded up together in a wooden mortar, dried in the sun, and ground to a fine powder.

Mũgokoro

The only ingredients in this powder were the roots of *mũhukũũra* mixed a small quantity of the roots of the plant called *mũimba-igũrũ*. These were pounded, dried, and then ground to a very fine powder.

Kahuno

The ingredients in *kahuno* powder were a desiccated, aborted foetus of a sheep, the feet of sheep or goats killed for magical purposes, a banana bud that had not come into flower in the normal way but had broken (p.1180) through the stem of the plant low down (this is called a *gĩthandĩka*), some *mũraria* leaves, the plant called *ihũthia* or *thĩna*, and a root of the plant called *mũbarabaria* taken from a place where such a root was exposed in a public pathway. All these things were charred together and then ground to a powder.

Ng'ondu

The ingredients of this powder, which was one of the ones used in all purification ceremonies carried out by a *mũndũ mũgo*, were very numerous indeed, and were as follows: the undigested stomach contents of ewes and rams (these were collected by a *mũndũ mũgo* every time he performed a ceremony entailing the slaughter of a beast, and were taken home, dried, and stored for the next time he prepared a fresh lot of *ng'ondu* powder); the stomach contents of one or two hyrax; some bones from ewes and rams slaughtered for ceremonies; some of the solitary locusts known as *itararĩki;* some papyrus salt; some sugar-cane; roots of the edible arum of the *ndirũ* species; roots of the species of banana known as *mũtahato;* a sweet potato of either the *mũndoro* or the *nyakĩbũri* species; roots of the wild raspberry known as *mũtare mwerũ;* several *ng'ondu ya kĩondo* plants (roots, leaves, stems and all); several *mũraria wa rũgongo* plants; several *ng'ondu ya kĩanda* plants or *gacuuru* plants; leaves, stems, and roots of *mahoroha* plants; leaves, stems, and roots of *coco* plants; *rũmũrĩ* leaves and roots; *mũrurĩ* leaves; *mũgumo* leaves; *mũkũyũ* leaves; *mũrerema* leaves; and *mũtharia-nduundu* tubers. These ingredients were charred together in a number of potsherds placed over several small fires, after which they were ground together to a fine black powder.

Thenge

This powder was made in the first instance at the initiation of a new member of the profession, and it consisted of the bones and stomach contents of the he-goat killed at his initiation, together with some *mũimba-igũrũ* creepers. These ingredients were all burnt together in the fire on which the meat of the goat was roasted at the initiation, and next morning they were ground to a powder.

If this powder made at an initiation ran out, and the man wanted to make more, he had to kill a he-goat specially for this purpose, and **treat** the bones and stomach contents in a similar way, the meat of the animal so killed, being shared with one or two other members of the profession.

p.1181
Mũgoco

The only ingredients in this powder were the roots of the *mũgoco* plant and a few roots of the plant called *mũhukũũra*. The roots were pounded in a mortar, dried, and ground to a fine powder.

Ceremonies connected with the Preparation of Magic Powders

When a *mũndũ mũgo* found that the magic powders in a number of his *mbũthũ* gourds were running low, he decided to make preparations for the making of a new stock. Having come to this decision, he announced his intention to a number of neighbouring members of the profession, some of whom would certainly also be beginning to run short in some of the same powders. These men arranged between them who would collect which ingredients, thus sharing the labour, which might involve a journey on to the plains or into the forest, or specific trapping work.

As soon as they began collecting ingredients, the *mũndũ mũgo* who had suggested that they prepare a new stock of powders, and at whose home the powders would be prepared after all the ingredients had been brought together, had to abstain from all sexual acts, as had his wife or wives. This rule of sexual abstinence did not, however, apply to the other members of the profession who were to collaborate with him in the collection of ingredients, provided that they did not take any of the things they collected into their homesteads, but as they collected them, stored them outside the homestead entrance. So long as they were outside the homestead they could not be contaminated by any sex act performed inside the homestead by the person who collected them, and those associated with him. After two or three weeks of collecting all the requisite ingredients, the man who had organised the proceedings fixed a day for each of his helpers to come to his homestead with their collections.

When all of those who were participating had arrived with their contributions, they set to work to sort them into separate piles, one for each powder to be made. Large fragments of potsherd were produced by the owner of the homestead, and those ingredients that had to be charred, were put into these and placed over fires, which were lit with embers taken from the hut of his senior wife, where his divining gourd was kept. Those ingredients that had to be pounded were prepared, (p.1182) and then set to dry in the sun. By evening all of the ingredients had been either charred or pounded, but no attempt was made to grind them to a powder on this day.

Instead, the charred or pounded ingredients of each powder were carefully put away, after all those present had noted which container held the ingredients of which powder.

Next morning the *andũ ago* reassembled, and the man at whose home the powders were being made arranged for sugar-cane to be cut and beer to be brewed on that day. While the sugar-cane was being crushed and the juice prepared for brewing, the ingredients of the powders were all ground to a fine powder. Once ground up, the different powders were not difficult to distinguish, for as they were made of quite different ingredients they each had distinctive features, although all of the charred powders were black, and most of the others were white or whitish.

The beer having been brewed and put to mature in the hut of the senior wife of the *mũndũ mũgo*, and the powders having each been ground to the requisite consistency and put away for the night, everyone retired.

On the following morning the important ceremony of *thiũrũra* of the powders took place. Without this ceremony the powders were of no value or potency, in spite of having been made of the correct ingredients, for until they had been thus magically treated they were only what they seemed to be: ground powder. Their magical qualities were latent in them, and could be cultivated only by the ceremony of *gũthiũrũra mĩthaiga* (to encircle the magic medicines). This took place as follows.

Early in the morning the *mũndũ mũgo* in charge, and at whose home the ingredients had been prepared, rose and went over to his senior wife's hut, where he filled a drinking horn and a gourd drinking cup with beer from that brewed on the previous day. Carrying these two vessels in his right and left hands respectively, he went out into the courtyard and stood facing the rising sun (not the sacred mountains). Here he prayed aloud to Ngai, the supreme deity, asking for a blessing upon the ceremonies that day. His prayer was extempore but always in the same general sense, and the following is a verbatim record of one such prayer:

> *Ngai, nĩ wee ndaroka gũkũhoya. Nĩnjinĩte mĩtĩ, na nĩngwenda kũmĩtua mĩthaiga. Nĩ wee Ngai, ndagũthaitha, na ngũgũthaitha nĩ ũndũ wa mĩtĩ ngĩĩrĩte. 'Thiũrũrithia ĩtuĩke mĩthaiga ya kũguna andũ. Na mũgo ũcio ũcinaga mĩtĩ*

ya kũũnũha andũ, iyũkia njohi ũũragage ũcio. Ngai wee nĩwe mwene ũgo wothe. Nĩwe wa'heire ũgo, na nĩwe waheire ago arĩa marĩ thĩ. 'Thiũrũrithia ũmũthĩ, nĩ getha kũrĩa ndĩthiaga kũguna andũ ngamaguna. (p.1183)
God, it is You whom I come this morning to pray to. I have prepared plants by burning them, and I wish to name them magic powders. It is You, O God, whom I now beseech, and I beseech You because of these plants I have collected. Assist me to *Ihiũrũra* them that they may become magic powders to succour people. And as for any *mũndũ mũgo* who makes magic powders to destroy people, I offer You this beer and ask You to kill such men. O God, it is You who are the owner of all magic power, it is You who gave me my magic power, it is You who gave magic power to those *andũ ago* who are now in the land of the spirits. Help me *thiũrũra* these powders this day, O God, that whither I go to help people I may be able to assist them.

Having prayed thus, the mũndũ mũgo threw the beer from the vessel in his right hand to the sky. He then prayed again in a similar manner and threw up the beer in the vessel in his left hand. Having finished, he went back to the hut, refilled both vessels, and came out again to pray to the spirits of the departed. He stood in the centre of his courtyard and prayed to the spirits of his parents and also to the spirits of departed andũ ago, saying:

Inyuĩ aa baba na maitũ, na inyuĩ ago arĩa me thĩ, ndaroka kũmũitĩra njohi. Nĩnjinĩte mĩtĩ, na nĩngũthiũrũra. Mũ'thiũrũrithie-ĩ. Iyũkia baba (here he named his father, and then his other deceased male relatives), *na inyuĩ aa baba, mwĩgaĩre. Inyuĩ na inyuĩ ago arĩa mwĩ thĩ, nĩ inyuĩ mwatũkunũrire, nĩ inyuĩ mwahetwo ũgo nĩ Ngai, na mũgĩtũgaĩra ũgo, mũgĩtũtigĩra. Ngĩthiũrũra, mũ'thiũrũrithie, na kũrĩa ngũthiĩ gũthondekana, mũgunane.*
You, O my father and those who are with him, and with my mother, and you O *andũ ago* who are in the ground, I come this morning to offer you beer. I have burnt plants and I am going to *thiũrũra* them, do you now do so with me. Receive this O father (here he named his father, and then his other deceased male relatives), and all you who are with him, and drink this beer among yourselves. You, too, O *andũ ago*, who are in the ground, it was you who initiated us, and you were given your magic powders by God, and you bequeathed your powers to us and left them to us. Today I am going to *thiũrũra* magic powers, do you then assist me, and whither I go to heal people, do you bring succour.

He then poured out the beer in the drinking horn as an offering to the male spirits. This done, he said:

Iyũkia, maitũ (naming his mother by name) *na inyuĩ aka arĩa angĩ aitũ* (naming the deceased wives of his uncles and any of his own deceased wives). *Inyuĩ na inyuĩ, mũiyũkie njohi mwĩgaĩre.*
Take this, my mother (naming his mother by name), and you other women of our family (naming the deceased wives of his uncles and any of his own deceased wives). You, also, take this beer and divide it among yourselves.

p.1184
Sometimes other prayers were added to these; for example, he might ask the departed spirits not to share this beer with any spirits who made a habit of causing sickness and trouble for those who survived them also, he might request the departed spirits of deceased *andũ ago* to punish all men who, having been cured by a *mũndũ mũgo*, refused to pay their fees, saying that they would have recovered anyhow, and thus they owed nothing to the *mũndũ mũgo*.

Having thus prayed to God for help and blessings, and to the departed spirits of his family and of the profession, the *mũndũ mũgo* went back to his wife's hut, where he and she drank a little beer and blessed themselves. This done, he retired to hi? own hut to wait for the arrival of the other *andũ ago* and one or two council elders whom he had invited to be present at the ceremony as witnesses, and later to drink beer. There were always some witnesses other than members of the profession, so that the public might know that the magic powders had been made for magic beneficial to the community, and not for anti-social witchcraft. Any *mũndũ mũgo* who was known to have completed the preparation of his magic powders without witnesses was seriously suspected of being a dealer in witchcraft (*ũrogi*).

When all the *andũ ago* who were coming for this ceremony had arrived, the owner of the homestead took one or two into his senior wife's hut to assist him in pouring off all of the beer except that in the first *ndua* gourd, which had had honey mixed with the sugar-cane juice. Having poured off all of the plain sugar-cane beer, they went out into the courtyard again, the wife bringing a winnowing tray, and the owner of the homestead bringing the string bag that contained his existing magic powders. These he placed on the winnowing tray. He then told his wife to bring out his blue bead necklace, which every *mũndũ mũgo* had, and which his wife kept in her hut, as it was not normally worn. This was also placed on the winnowing tray. Next he brought out and set near the winnowing tray all the potsherds with the different powders that had been prepared on the previous day. His wife then brought out his wooden cooking spoon (*mũũndũri*), her grinding-stone (*thĩo*), an awl, and a knife, which had to be one normally used in the skinning and cutting up of sacrificial animals. These things were also laid on the winnowing tray.

Next, the owner of the homestead told his wife to bring out the small *ndua* gourd containing the honey and sugar-cane juice beer, together with a *gĩtete* bottle gourd and a drinking horn. The *gĩtete* gourd was filled from the *ndua* gourd, but it was not *unithio*, that is to say, it was not filled until it overflowed, as was normal when filling any gourd from a *ndua* brewing pot. The owner drank three times from the *gĩtete* bottle gourd, the contents of which were then called *mũguĩ wa ago* (the arrow [p.1185] of the *andũ ago*). It was filled up to the brim again and passed to the next *mũndũ mũgo* present, then refilled, and so on until each *mũndũ mũgo* present had drunk from it.

The *gĩtete* was then filled yet again and put aside, after which a drinking horn was filled from the *ndua* and sent to some relative of the owner of the village as the requisite *mahuti* (the first hornful—see Chapter 8). The beer left in the *ndua* was then poured off into a *kĩnya* gourd and put back in the senior wife's hut with the rest of the beer. Everything was then ready for the ceremony of *gũthiũrũra* (to encircle).

The assembled *andũ ago* gathered round the winnowing tray and the potsherds containing the various powders prepared on the previous day, one of which they chose to *thiũrũra* first.

If the first powder chosen was *ũũmũ*, this potsherd was placed before the *mũndũ mũgo* who was the owner of the homestead, and he solemnly put the blue necklace from the winnowing tray round the potsherd, saying as he did so, "*Nĩndagwĩkĩra mũgathĩ, mũthaiga ũgunage andũ na ũgune ciana*" (I put this necklace upon you, O magic powder, that you may be of succour to people and to children). Note that he addressed the powder as if it were a human being, as he would throughout the ceremony.

Next he picked up the wooden spoon, the grinding-stone, the knife, the awl, and five *mbũthũ* gourds of magic powder from his bag. One of these had to be the *mbũthũ* containing what was left of his old stock of *ũũmũ*, and the other four had to be powders which had somewhat similar attributes and uses, or as the Kikuyu said, "*Iria ithingatĩte mũthaiga ũcio*" (Those that follow close upon that magic powder).

With these nine things held together in both hands, he looked up into the sky and prayed to the deity. As he prayed he held the nine things towards the sky and made a circular pass to accompany each of nine sentences of prayer, as follows:

Wee Ngai nĩwe mwene andũ,	You, O God, are the owner of all men,
Na nĩwe mwene ũgo wothe.	And You are the owner of all magic power.
Rĩu nĩngũthiũrũra mũthaiga.	Now I am going to *thiũrũra* the magic powder.
Na warĩ mũtĩ, ngaũtua mũtĩ.	And it was a plant and I called it a plant.

Na rĩũ ngũũtua ũũmũ.	And now I am going to name it *ũũmũ.*
Ũ'thiũrũrithie, Ngai, ũtuĩke ũũmũ,	Help me to *thiũrũra* it, O God, that it may become *ũũmũ,*
Na ũng'unithie.	And help me to do good with it.
Ndathiĩ gũthondekana, ũthondekithie,	When I go to heal with it, help me to heal.
Tondũ ũrarĩ mũtĩ, 'thiũrũrithia ũtuĩke ũũmũ.	Since it was a plant, help me to *thiũrũra* it that it may become *ũũmũ.*

p.1186

Next he bent down over the potsherd containing the powder and in absolute silence made nine circular passes round it with the nine objects held in his two hands. Having made these nine passes in absolute silence, he then addressed nine sentences to the magic powder, and as he said each one he motioned in the direction of the potsherd with nine objects he held in his hand. The sentences were as follows:

1. *Wee, ũndũ uuma mũtĩ, itagũtua mũthaiga, na ũtarĩ mũthaiga, ũrorĩo muuma ũyũ.*
You now, since you were a plant, if I have not given you the name of a magic powder and if you are not indeed now a magic powder, may you be consumed by this *muuma*.

2. *Wee, ũndũ ndagũtua rĩĩtwa rĩu, ũtarĩ ũũmũ, ũrorĩo nĩ muuma ũyũ.*
You now, since I have given you a name, if you be not in very truth *ũũmũ*, may you be consumed by this *muuma*.

3. *Wee, ũndũ ũrĩa ngakuonania naguo ũngĩkaremwo, ũrorĩo nĩ muuma ũyũ*.
You now, if in any matter with which I bring you face to face yon should fail, may you be consumed by this *muuma*.

4. *Wee, ingĩgakuonania na nda ya mũtumia ũkuura, na ũremo nĩ kũmũthondeka, ũrorĩo nĩ muuma ũyũ.*
You now, if I should bring you face to face with the womb of a woman that has an excessive flow of blood, and if you should fail to heal her, may you be consumed by this *muuma*.

5. *Wee, ingĩgakuonania na rũharo, ũngĩkaremwo nĩ kũhonia, ũrorĩo nĩ muum ũyũ*.
You now, if I should bring you face to face with severe diarrhoea and you should fail to cure it, may you be consumed by this *muuma*.

6. *Wee, ingĩgathondeka mũndũ nawe, ahone, na mũndũ ũcio arege na nduhi ya. mũndũ mũgo, gwake ũtagathũkia, ũrorĩo nĩ muuma ũyũ.*
You now, if I should ever treat someone with you, and if that person should get well and then refuse to pay the agreed fee of the *mũndũ mũgo*, if then you should fail to bring trouble upon him, may you be consumed by this *muuma*.

7. *Kũrĩa ndĩratheka, wee nawe wathiĩ kuo, ũtagatheka, ũrorĩo nĩ muuma ũyũ*
At any place where I am happy and smiling, if you go there too, and are not also happy and smiling, may you be consumed by this *muuma*

8. *Wee, kũrĩa ngarakara, nawe ũtakarakara, ũrorĩo nĩ muuma ũyũ*.
You now, at any place where I am made angry, if you do not also get angry, may you be consumed by this *muuma*.

9. *Rĩu kũrĩa ndĩrathondekana, mũgo ũũkaga kuo nĩ kĩũnũhu, nawe ũtakamũthũkia ũtuĩke ta ũrogi kũrĩ ũcio, ũrorĩo nĩ muuma ũyũ*.

Now, finally, at any place where I am healing people, if thither any other *mũndũ mũgo* shall come, not with healing, but with evil intent, if you should not cause that man to suffer, and turn into witchcraft against him, may you be consumed by this *muuma*.

p.1187
Having thus addressed the newly dedicated *ũũmũ* powder in this very serious way, and adjured it to do all that it was called upon to do, the man removed the necklace from round the potsherd, and laid the powder aside, as it was now ready for use.

He then turned to the next lot of powder to be dedicated, as each magic powder had to be encircled in the appropriate way, and with the appropriate formula of adjuration. In each case, before actually doing in silencc for the requisite number of times, he prayed to God with the same number of sentences as he held objects in his hands. This number was dictated by the laws of the profession, and varied according to the nature of the powder now to be encircled. Having each powder the correct number of times, he addressed it with the same number of sentences of adjuration. The following were the rules relating to the various other powders we have listed.

To *thiũrũra* the powder called *rũthuko*, the *mũndũ mũgo* had to hold the wooden spoon, the grinding stone, the knife, the awl, and three of his *mbũthũ* gourds of magic powders in his hands, making seven objects in all. He had to pray to God with seven sentences of prayer, punctuated by seven circular passes. He had then to *thiũrũra* the powder seven times in silence and finally address seven sentences of adjuration to it. The three *mbũthũ* gourds of magic powder used to *thiũrũra* it had to include one of *ira*, and two that had affinities with *rũthuko*, thus two from among the following: *kĩnoria*, *ũũmũ*, *thiari*, *mũcanjamũka*, and *mũũnga*.

To *thiũrũra* the powder known as *kĩnoria*, the *mũndũ mũgo* had to hold the four objects obtained from his wife as already listed, together with two *mbũthũ* gourds of magic powders, one of *ira*, and one chosen from among *ũũmũ*, *thiari*, *mũgoco*, *mũũnga*, and *mũgokoro*, making six objects in all. Thus six prayers had to be offered to God, six circular passes made punctuating the prayer, six silent passes made to *thiũrũra* the powder, and six adjurations addressed to the powder.

For *mũcanjamũka* the magic number was seven, and in addition to the four objects from his wife and the *mbũthũ* of *ira*, he had to have two other *wũthũ* gourds in his hands chosen from among the following: *ũũmũ*, *rũthuko*, *thiari*, *mũgoco*, and *mũũnga*.

For the magic powder called *njeehũ* the magic number was either five or nine, according to choice. If the person carrying out the ceremony chose five as his number, he had to hold in his hands the four objects from his wife, plus the *mbũthũ* of *ira* powder. If, on the other hand, he chose nine as his number, he had to add the following *mbũthũ* gourds: *ũũmũ*, *njeehũ*, *ikũnja*, and *ikanda*. The reason the number five was allowed as an alternative to nine in this case was that many *andũ ago* did not (p.1188) possess *ikũnja* and *ikanda* powders, and therefore had to use the number five or not make *njeehũ* powder at all.

The magic number for *ikũnja* powder was again either five or nine, and for the same reasons as in connection with *njeehũ*. The objects used to *thiũrũra ikũnja* were the four objects obtained from the wife plus *ira*, or else these five objects plus the following four: *njeehũ*, *ikanda*, *ũũmũ* and the old *ikũnja mbũthũ* gourd which was to be refilled.

To *thiũrũra ikanda* powder, the magic number was nine, with no alternative, thus, anyone who did not have the requisite things for the ceremony had to buy his *ikanda* powder, and could not prepare

it himself. These nine objects were the four from his wife with the following *mbũthũ* gourds: *ira*, *ũũmũ*, *njeehũ*, *ikũnja*, and the gourd of *ikanda* that was to be refilled.

For the *thiũrũra* ceremony for the three following powders: *mũũnga mũgoco*, and *mũgokoro*, the magic number was in each case seven, and the objects used to make the passes had to be the four obtained from his wife, the *mbũthũ* of *ira*, and any two of the following: *ũũmũ*, *mũcanjamũka*, *mũũnga*, *thiari*, *mũgoco*, *mũgokoro*, and *rũthuko*.

To *thiũrũra* the magic powder known as *mũgũthũkũ*, the magic number was five, and the objects used were any three of the four objects obtained from his wife, together with the *mbũthũ* of *ira* and the old *mbũthũ* of *mũgũthũkũ* that was to be refilled.

To *thiari*, the magic number was seven, and the objects used had to include the *mbũthũ* of *ira* powder, a small gourd of honey beer, a small gourd of fresh milk, and the old *mbũthũ* which was to be refilled with *thiari*. To these four objects were added any three of the following: the *mbũthũ* of *ũũmũ*, the *mbũthũ* of *rũthuko*, and the four objects obtained from his wife.

To *thiũrũra ng'ondu*, *ngoma*, and *kahuno*, the magic number was eight, and the objects used had to be the four objects obtained from his wife, the *mbũthũ* of *ira* powder, the old *mbũthũ* that was to be refilled, plus any two of the following: *ũũmũ*, and any of the other powders for which eight was the magic number.

For the magic powder known as *kĩoho*, the procedure was somewhat different. This powder had to be *thiũrũra*-d 30 times, divided into three groups of 10. This the *mũndũ mũgo* did alone and at night. The details have been described in that section of this chapter which deals with specialists in protective magic.

The magic powder known **as** *thenge* was never prepared at the same time as any other powders, and it was replaced only in connection with some ceremony involving the divining gourd. A *mũndũ mũgo* acquired his *mbũthũ* of *thenge* magic powder (made from he-goat bones) at his (p.1189) initiation ceremony, when he was given his divining gourd. Subsequently, as it became necessary to slaughter a he-goat either to purify the divining gourd, to put a rawhide handle on it, or to replace it by a new one, more *thenge* magic powder could be made, and if absolutely essential, a man could slaughter a he-goat specially in order to refill his *mbũthũ* gourd. If he did so, he had first to associate the goat with the divining gourd in his possession. Having prepared the ingredients, the man *thiũrũra*-d it without necessarily having to call in other members of the profession, and the magic number for this powder was nine. It was *thiũrũra*-d on the flat grinding-stone on which it had been ground to a powder, and was encircled with the blue necklace while it was being thus treated. The objects involved had to include those four that he obtained from his wife, the *mbũthũ* of *ira* powder, the old *mbũthũ* of *thenge* made for the man on his initiation by his "father in the profession", and a small gourd of honey beer. To these seven objects were added two more *mbũthũ* from among the following: *ũũmũ*, *njeehũ*, *ikũnja*, and *mũgũthũkũ*.

Ira powder was never *thiũrũra*-d before being put into its *mbũthũ*. It was the only powder which did not owe its magical propensities in any way to magical formulae or ceremonies, and which in itself was magical.

In addition to the 18 magic powders which we have described and which were kept in *mbũthũ* bottle gourds in a *mũndũ mũgo's* outfit, some *andũ ago* also kept a *kĩnandũ* oil bottle gourd with a special liquid mixture. The raw blood of a specially slaughtered he-goat was put straight into a bottle gourd, to which was added raw honey, castor oil prepared in a new clay cooking pot, and

the rendered down fat of the slaughtered he-goat. To this were added some of each of the following magic powders: *thenge*, *ũũmũ*, *thiari*, *rũthuko*, *njeehũ*, *mũcanjamũka*, *mũũnga*, *mũgokoro*, and *ng'ondu*. The whole mixture was then well shaken, and ready for use. From the skin of the he-goat killed for its fat and blood he cut rawhide strips for his right-hand middle finger and for the neck of the *kĩnandũ* bottle gourd, which was put into his bag with his other magical apparatus.

The mixture in the *kĩnandũ* gourd was never allowed to get low, in fact, never less than half way down. As the owner used it he constantly replenished it with honey, he-goat fat, castor oil, blood, and powders, all of which he obtained from ordinary sources, and need not have specially prepared.

The contents of a *mũndũ mũgo's kĩnandũ* were regarded as a very potent protection against witchcraft and the dangers of travel, and every *mũndũ mũgo* who possessed such a *kĩnandũ* had many requests from travellers for some of the mixture to be rubbed on to the nape of their (p.1190) necks, their rumps, and their ankles. For such protection a traveller had to pay a fee of a piece of pig iron, a goat skin, or a string of beads.

After any magic powders had been prepared and dedicated in the way described in the foregoing pages, there came the final ceremony of dividing the powders among those who had helped to collect the ingredients, and putting them into the *mbũthũ* bottle gourds in which they were to be kept.

After all the powders that had been prepared had been dedicated, they proceeded with the ceremony of *kũũhĩgia mũthaiga* (to make the magic powders wise), so that these might "possess widespread reputation". The *mũndũ mũgo* in whose village the powders had been prepared sat down with the potsherds containing the powders in front of him, and the other *andũ ago* present gathered round, as did all the council elders and women who were present for the beer drinking that would take place presently. The *mũndũ mũgo* in charge took a little powder from each potsherd in turn and spilled it on the ground to the right and to the left, and as he did so he said, "*Inyuĩ ago a tene, iyũkia mũthaiga*" (You, the *andũ ago* of the past, accept this magic powder). Even if a *mũndũ mũgo* was making only one powder for a special occasion, some of it had to be offered in this way to the spirits of departed members of the profession. Then he took a little powder from each of the potsherds containing "good powders", that is to say, powders used in purification ceremonies and in healing the sick, as distinct from powders like *kĩoho*, *ikanda*, and *njeehũ*, that were used to ward off enemies and wild beasts. He mixed a little of each of these "good powders" in his right palm and called a little girl who had been through the second birth ceremony to lick and swallow it. Then he did the same with a little boy, after which he himself licked some, and gave some to his wife to lick. Then every person present, including the council elders, other *andũ ago*, and women, similarly licked some. In this way the powder was "disseminated" far and wide, for the people had come from all over the country, and the powders thus acquired a "wide-spread" reputation.

This done, the potsherds containing the powder were laid aside by one of the granaries, and beer was brought out and divided among the *andũ ago*, members of the family, the council elders, and the women. When the beer drinking was over, the guests all departed and the powders were either divided then and there among those *andũ ago* who had helped to collect the ingredients, and those who had come to purchase some, or else were left to be divided on the next morning. Each *mũndũ mũgo*, even those who helped to collect the *ingredients*, had to pay in goat skins or bits of iron for the powder he took away. The owner of the homestead who had organised the preparation of the

powders kept what he required to refill his own *mbũthũ* gourds, together with any surplus, which he might sell at some later date.

p.1191

The Diving Gourd (*Mwano*) *and the Ceremonies connected with it*

The Contents of a Divining Gourd

In the course of this chapter we have already described a variety of the objects which counted as *mbũgũ* and which were used as objects of divination when poured out of a divining gourd by a *mũndũ mũgo*. Among other things, these included pebbles, bits of wood, beads, cowrie shells, bones, and bits of skin. Although these were loosely spoken of as *mbũgũ* before dedication, they did not strictly become so until they had been specially dedicated for the purpose of divination. Almost any small object could become a *mbũgũ* by being dedicated for this purpose and put into a divining gourd. About 80 per cent of all *mbũgũ* consisted of small waterworn pebbles, or in some cases *mũbage* seeds, derived from many different localities, and the remaining 20 per cent or so consisted of a mixture of the following objects specially reserved for the purpose: the desiccated parts of the he-goat used in the ceremony of initiation into the profession, small lumps of raw fat put in in connection with various purification ceremonies, which in the course of time dried and shrivelled, cowrie shells and beads picked up in territorial areas away from the place where the *mũndũ mũgo* lived, and any unusual small object that the *mũndũ mũgo* might have come across in unusual circumstances.

The number of *mbũgũ* in a divining gourd varied very considerably indeed, and in some cases ran to several thousand objects, while 800 or 900 was a more usual number. Younger members of the profession often had many fewer objects in their divining gourds.

Every *mũndũ mũgo* had in his own divining gourd certain *mbũgũ* which meant very definite things to him and him only. Thus a man who had a *mbũgũ* that was obtained in Maasai country from a Maasai woman, knew that if that particular *mbũgũ* appeared in a pile that had been poured out for divination, then the matter he had to deal with was connected in some way with a female member of the Maasai tribe. Or again, a man might have one particular *mbũgũ* that to him spelled certain death, and he knew from experience that when that *mbũgũ* appeared in a (p.1192) pile poured out for the person consulting him, then death for that person or someone related to him was certain to come in a few days' time

Apart, however, from the direct association of certain *mbũgũ* with particular circumstances, the normal method of interpreting *mbũgũ* when divining was by counting, and indeed, Kikuyu divination was for the most part dependent upon the significance of numbers (see section at the end of this chapter). When a man who was consulting a diviner had *mbũgũ* poured out from the divining gourd for him, he was told to count them into units of 10 each, and the diviner's answer depended to very large extent on the number of units of 10, considered in conjunction with the number of *mbũgũ* less than 10 that were left over. This fact obviously allowed for a great many combinations. Moreover, the possible combinations were greatly increased by the fact that certain of the *mbũgũ* had special significance, and that significance might be according to which pile of 10 such *mbũgũ* were included in.

There were certain elementary rules regarding the significance of *mbũgũ*, and as they were not trade secrets I was allowed to record them. The *mbũgũ* made from various parts of the he-goat, for example, that was used at the initiation of a man into the profession had special significance in

connection with matters affecting stock, and in relation to the owner of a homestead, while the *mbũgũ* made from the wood of *mũthakwa*, *mũkenia*, and *mũgere*, and from *kĩrago* bulbs had a special significance in connection with magic, and indicated that the cause of the patient's trouble was to be found in magic of one sort or another.

In spite of the fact that some *mbũgũ* had a special significance to their owner, most specialists in the art of divining would give exactly the same readings to any particular arrangement of *mbũgũ*, but I have not been able to acquire the secrets of their methods. It is more or less certain, however, that a definite system of numbers was involved.

On the other hand, it is equally certain that specialists in divining perceived a good deal about each patient's situation, and as the Kikuyu said of a really good *mũndũ mũgo*, "*Onaga ta rũheni o na itarĩ ndare, na ndangĩhĩtia*" (He sees like a lightning flash even without waiting for the *mbũgũ* to be counted, and he makes no mistake).

Adding to the Mbũgũ

As we have already seen in the section dealing with the initiation of a *mũndũ mũgo*, he acquired his divining gourd during his initiation, at which time his initiator gave him a number of *mbũgũ* from his divining gourd, and to these he added any *mbũgũ* he might have collected in (p.1193) preparation for his initiation, the pebbles he got from the pond at the waterfall when he was thrown into it, and certain *mbũgũ* that were part of the-goat killed at his initiation.

Having thus acquired a divining gourd and a small number of the *mbũgũ*, the newly initiated member of the profession had to memorise every one of these *mbũgũ* so that he could recognise them at once and know that this pebble came from the pond by the waterfall, that one from his initiator's collection, or from the Thika Falls, the Maasai plains, or wherever he happened to have collected it or have had it collected for him. While memorising these *mbũgũ* by examining them and repeating their origins to himself each day, he set to work to collect other objects which would serve as *mbũgũ* and with which he would augment his collection. If he went on a journey to any territorial area other than his own, he looked out for smooth water worn pebbles, for beads and cowrie shells dropped on the pathway, or for any unusual small objects, and he brought them back and hid them near his homestead until he had enough to justify a dedication ceremony. Not only did he collect such *mbũgũ* himself, but he also instructed his friends to collect *mbũgũ* for him in distant places, and gradually he acquired a large number.

When he had from 20-30 *mbũgũ* hidden, he decided that it was time that these were incorporated, and he fixed a day for the necessary ceremony. On the day previous to that fixed he had some beer prepared by his wife who kept his divining gourd, and early next morning he went out with a hornful and a gourd cupful, and prayed to God facing the rising sun. He thanked the deity for having enabled him to collect these objects, for having kept him safe and alive to this day, and he informed the deity that he was going to add these objects to those already in his divining gourd, and call them *mbũgũ*. He therefore asked that the deity bless the ceremony, and that he cause the new objects to live at peace with those already in the divining gourd.

Having offered beer to the deity, he went back to the hut and got more beer, which he offered to his own family departed spirits, asking for their blessing in the way described in Chapter 8. This done, he brought his divining gourd from the hut, together with the split string bag that he used as a mat on which to pour out the *mbũgũ* when divining, and he put these down in the courtyard. He then took more beer in a drinking horn to the place where he had hidden the *mbũgũ* that he was

going to incorporate. Here he poured out beer on the ground and prayed to the spirits of dead *andũ ago* saying, "I have come to fetch these *mbũgũ* that have been in your keeping. Accept this beer as an offering". He then took the objects from their hiding place, and laid them on the mat. Then he poured out a handful of *mbũgũ* from the (p.1194) divining gourd so that they lay in a little pile near the new ones. From a *gĩtete* bottle gourd he had brought out he poured out offerings on the four sides of the mat, praying to the spirits of the dead *andũ ago* as did so, asking for their blessing so that these new *mbũgũ* might be useful, speak the truth in divining, and not quarrel with the old ones.

Next he addressed the *mbũgũ* on the mat as though they were human and told them that he was going to make them *ciarana* (adopt each other). He then poured out some beer between the new and the old piles, then over both piles of *mbũgũ*. Next he took his *mbũthũ* gourd of *ira* powder, and he rubbed some of this first over the new *mbũgũ* and then over the old ones, after which he rubbed both piles with he-goat fat, mixed them together, and put them all into the divining gourd. He then anointed the divining gourd itself with *ira* powder on its "navel", at the base, on the "eye", and up to its neck.

The ceremony being thus completed, he took the divining gourd back to his wife's hut, where it was kept, and hung it up again on its special forked stick. He then poured out beer at the foot of the *kĩhanya*, offering another prayer to the spirits, and also addressed the divining gourd itself, adjuring it and its contents to be wise and good and not to *thetha* (crush, destroy or bring misfortune to) himself or his wife.

When a man with a long established divining gourd which did not really need adding to went on a journey to some distant place and found some particularly good *mbũgũ* object, he did not have to lay it aside until he had accumulated enough for a ceremony such as that described above, but added it to the collection with the following very simple ceremony. He rubbed the new *mbũgũ* with *ira* powder to purify it, put it into his mouth, and put his lips to the mouth of his divining gourd, ejecting the new *mbũgũ* into the gourd to join the existing ones.

Whenever a man had added new *mbũgũ* to his divining gourd, whether a large number with the longer ceremony, or only one or two with the simple ceremony, he had to arrange for a friend to come next day and ask him to divine. He had to see to it that his friend brought a small bit of iron as a fee, which was not used by the *mũndũ mũgo* for any purpose of his own, but was put into the string bag in which the divining gourd was kept, as a fee to the divining gourd itself, and not as a fee to the man.

If a Divining Gourd fell to the Ground

It sometimes happened that the string bag containing the divining gourd, which was kept hanging up on the special forked post (*kĩhanya*) in the hut (p.1195) of the senior wife, fell to the ground, either because the leather handle of the bag broke, or a branch of the forked post broke. If a *mũndũ mũgo* came home and found that either of these things had happened, it was a very serious matter and he had to take steps at once to "kill the divining gourd" before it killed him. The fact that it had fallen to the ground was taken to be a sure sign that it was trying to kill the owner.

The ceremony of "killing the divining gourd" in such circumstances differed slightly according to whether the divining gourd that had fallen thus was the original one which the man had received on his initiation as a member of the profession, or was another that had been substituted for it at a later date for one reason or another.

We will first consider the procedure if the divining gourd that had fallen was the original one acquired at initiation. As soon as the *mũndũ mũgo* discovered the catastrophe he temporarily placed the string bag back on its forked post. At once he began preparing some sugar-cane juice and honey and set it to brew as beer, meanwhile sending messages to one or more other members of the profession to come early next morning and help him conduct the ceremony. He then bought a new gourd of suitable size, shape, and purity to make into a divining gourd to take the place of the one that he was going to kill. Having made these preparations, and the beer having been set to brew overnight, nothing else happened until early the next morning.

At dawn, just as the sun rose, the *mũndũ mũgo* filled a drinking horn and a gourd cup with honey beer, and standing with it in the courtyard facing the rising sun, he prayed to Ngai Riũa (God the Sun). This prayer was extempore but was to the following effect:

> O God, the Sun, You O God who created me, who gave me life, who chose me to be a *mũndũ mũgo*, and who gave me my divining gourd, I do not know if it is You who have caused the divining gourd to fall to the ground that I may die, or if it is the spirits who are angry. Now, O God, if it is indeed You who have done this thing, I beseech You to have mercy upon me and let the divining gourd die instead of me. Have mercy, for You are the God of mercy. If I have done something that has made You angry, accept my supplication, and accept this offering that I make to You.

He then poured out the beer in the horn, throwing it upwards to the sky, and he repeated this with the beer in the gourd drinking cup.

This done, he went back to the hut, refilled the two vessels with beer, and came out again to pray to the family departed spirits and the spirits of deceased members of the profession. Here again he pleaded that if it was they who desired his death and had for that reason caused (p.1196) the divining gourd to fall to the ground, to accept this offering and accept the death of the divining gourd instead of the death of its owner. He then poured out the libations to the spirits. This was done first in the centre of the courtyard and then at the entrance to the homestead.

He then returned to the hut, where he and his wife each drank some beer and blessed themselves with it, after which they waited for the arrival of the members of the profession who had been called in to assist in the ceremony of killing the divining gourd.

When they arrived, they sat down and gave the *mũndũ mũgo* detailed instructions of how the ceremony had to be performed. This was not because he himself did not know, but because it was not customary for any *mũndũ mũgo* to act in such matters without the advice and corroboration of others. Having consulted with them, and got the order of the ceremonies clearly worked out in his mind, they proceeded to act.

First the old divining gourd in its bag was carried out of the hut, taken out of its bag, wrapped up in the string bag mat that was usually used in divining ceremonies, and laid upon a winnowing tray in the centre of the courtyard to "await its death".

Next it was necessary to prepare the bottle gourd that was to become the new divining gourd. This was done in exactly the same way that the original divining gourd had been prepared on the day of initiation. The new gourd had to be smoked with wild olive smoke, have an "eye" put in, and be marked with the owner's brand, after which it was filled with honey and blood (this mixture being called *mũguĩ*, and drunk by the *andũ ago* who were present). When the new divining gourd was thus ready, the actual ceremony of killing the old one took place.

The other members of the profession sat around in a circle and the owner squatted down by the divining gourd, which was still wrapped in the string mat, and with his right fist he struck the

bundle a number of times, breaking the divining gourd to pieces so that all the *mbũgũ* were freed in the string bag. As he struck it he said, "*Wee, mwano, tiwe ũkwendaga ngue? Nĩ nil ngũgĩkũũraga, niĩ ndiũke. Wee rĩũ ũkue-ĩ, na ũndiũkie, na ũriũkie mũka wakwa, na ũriũkie mũciĩ*" (You, divining gourd, was it not you that wished me to die? And so I am going to kill you, so that I myself may live again. You know I command you now to die, and bring me back to life, and bring my wife back to life, and bring my home back to life).

When he had thus smashed and killed the old divining gourd, he was taken straight over to where a he-goat had been specially slaughtered, and he was made to put on his right-hand middle finger the bit of skin (p.1197) that had been left on its breast, in the same way that a man did at his initiation as a *mũndũ mũgo*.

Meanwhile, the other members of the profession unwrapped the bundle and removed from it and laid aside all the broken fragments of the old divining gourd, leaving all the *mbũgũ* on the string mat. From the week of the old divining gourd and its navel (the scar at the base), they carefully cut two circular discs of the gourd, which were added to the *mbũgũ*, so that the old divining gourd might in this way be associated with the new one in which these *mbũgũ* would soon be put. Then they cut small stems of *mũgere* wood, *mũthakwa*, *mũimba-igũrũ*, and *mũkenia*, and from these they cut five little round balls of wood to be *mbũgũ*, two from the *mũthakwa* wood and one each from the other woods. These five new *mbũgũ*, with the two made from the old divining gourd, made seven new ones in all. They were all rubbed over with *ira* powder by the man who owned the divining gourd, and were mixed with the old ones, after which they were all together rubbed over with raw fat from the he-goat.

The man's senior wife, who was keeper of the divining gourd, was then called to have a rawhide strip, cut from the skin of the goat's left foreleg, put on to her wrist. A strip cut from the scrotum of the goat was put on the neck of the new divining gourd, and one cut from the foreskin round the penis and one from the forehead of the goat were put respectively on to the *mbũthũ* gourds which contained his *ira* and his *ũũmũ* powders. This done, the owner of the old divining gourd put his *mbũgũ* into the new divining gourd, stoppered it up with the old stopper, and put it into his string bag.

Taking with him a litde finger millet grain, he went into his wife's hut and dug up the *kĩhanya* (forked stick) of *mũthakwa* wood upon which the old divining gourd used to hang. He put some finger millet grain into the hole and then a newly cut *kĩhanya*. Out in the courtyard he fetched his string bag containing his new divining gourd, and his other one containing his magic powders, together with a gourd drinking vessel full of honey beer. He hung the two string bags up on the new *kĩhanya*, and then poured out the beer at the foot of it, praying to the departed spirits in general as he did so, saying, "*Mũrũmie kĩhanya gĩkĩ*" (May you keep this new *kĩhanya* firm).

Out in the courtyard again, he and one of his visiting *andũ ago* ate the pasted breast of the he-goat, exchanging greetings exactly as already described in connection with the initiation of a *mũndũ mũgo*. This done, the rest of the meat was eaten by those present, except for the sacrum with the lumbar and caudal vertebrae attached (*rũcuthĩ*) and part of the first chamber of the stomach (*mũromo wa ihu*), which were kept until the (p.1198) next day. After the meat eating came a beer feast. Later in the evening the bones of the goat were put on a bonfire to burn and a little new beer was set to brew. Next morning one of the visiting members of the profession came to the homestead, and he and the owner took the bone of the goat from the fire, poured honey beer over

the place where the fire had been, and ate the two joints that had been laid aside on the previous day. This concluded the ceremony.

The old *kĩhanya* was broken up, and these pieces, together with the fragments of the old divining gourd, were left lying on the floor of the hut to rot away or be eaten by white ants.

If a divining gourd other than the original one that the man had acquired on his initiation into the profession fell down, it was not killed in the way described above, but the *mbũgũ* which it contained were emptied from it and transferred to a new gourd without its being broken. Except in so far as the old gourd was not broken up, the ceremony was in all details the same as the one described above.

Changing Mbũgũ to a New Divining Gourd

There usually came a time in the course of a *mũndũ mũgo's* career when for one reason or another it was desirable to transfer his *mbũgũ* from their old divining gourd to a new one. This was done if the divining gourd was getting too small to hold the whole of the owner's collection of *mbũgũ*, if a small chip broke out of the old divining gourd, if the divining gourd cracked, or if there was continuous sickness in the owner's home and another member of the profession diagnosed the trouble as being due to the ill will of the divining gourd.

In all such cases the procedure depended upon whether the divining gourd that was to be abandoned in favour of a new one was the one acquired at initiation to the profession, or whether it was one which had been subsequently substituted for the original one. In the former case, the old divining gourd that was to be abandoned had to be "killed" in the same way as if it had fallen from its peg, and the ceremonies accompanying the transfer were the same as already described, except for the following two differences: the prayers to God and to the departed spirits were worded in a manner appropriate to the circumstances, and the old *kĩhanya* was not pulled up and replaced.

If the divining gourd that was to be abandoned was not the original one acquired at initiation into the profession, it was not "killed", but merely had its contents all poured out. In other details the ceremonies were the same as above.

p.1199
If a Diving Gourd broke up of its own Accord

I somtimes happened that the weight of accumulated *mbũgũ* caused an diving gourd to split and break up without any apparent cause. If a divining gourd "died" in this way it was a very serious matter and involved the owner in a variety of ceremonies and considerable expense.

First of all he had to prepare a new divining gourd and carry out the ceremony of transferring the *mbũgũ* to their new gourd. Except in so far as minor details were concerned, this part of the ceremony was the same as that already described in connection with the transfer of *mbũgũ* to a new divining gourd for any other reason, such as its being too small, or having a chip in it. This ceremony having been completed, the owner next had to sacrifice a fat ram for the religious sacrifice of *gũitĩra Ngai maguta* (pouring out fat for God), which was performed in the manner described in Chapter 25.

Finally, the owner had to sacrifice yet another ram for the ceremony of *gwakia icua mũciĩ* (lighting a bonfire in the homestead). This ceremony he conducted himself, and did not have to call on

another *mũndũ mũgo* as an ordinary elder had to do when he had some reason for performing this particular ceremony of purification.

In Chapter 22 we have already noted, under "Standard Fines and Punishments for Criminal Offences", that if any person deliberately broke a *mũndũ mũgo's* divining gourd or destroyed it by setting fire to the hut in which it was kept, he had to pay compensation equivalent to that due for murder or manslaughter, in addition to a fat he-goat for the ceremony of putting the *mbũgũ* into a new divining gourd. The reason for such a heavy fine was that a *mũndũ mũgo's* divining gourd counted as though it was a human being. It was addressed as such constantly, it was spoken of as being alive or dead respectively, and it could acquire *thahu* (ceremonial uncleanness) like a human; thus its "death", by accident or any other cause, was a very serious matter indeed.

Preparation of a Second Divining Gourd to be used for Divining at a Distance

We have already seen, some members of the profession specialised in the art of divining, and as their reputation grew, they were called upon to divine in other areas, and even among other tribes. A man who had only one divining gourd could not take that gourd outside his own homestead except for the purpose of initiating a new member into the profession. If, therefore, he had no second divining gourd for travelling, (p.1200) he had, when he was called upon to divine in some far territory, to go thither without his divining gourd, and then on arrival there, go to the home of a local *mũndũ mũgo* and ask permission to divine with his divining gourd.

This was not considered a satisfactory way of doing things, so a man who specialised in divining sooner or later decided that he had to have a second divining gourd. Having come to such a decision, he made the necessary arrangements as follows.

He had honey beer prepared, and in the evening put a hoop made from *mũimbũ-igũrũ* creepers on the neck of the *ndua* gourd in which it was being brewed. He also stoppered that *ndua* with some *mũimba*-igũrũ stems, and placed other such stems on the roof of one of the granaries for the night. Although it was not necessary, he often called in another *mũndũ mũgo* to assist him in the ceremony on the next morning.

Early in the morning he first prayed to the deity facing the rising sun, and made an offering to God. He then prayed to the departed spirits of his ancestors and to dead members of the profession, especially those who had formerly specialised in divining. This done, he prepared to divide his *mbũgũ* and so start his second divining gourd.

First of all he went to some point outside his homestead where he had hidden away a number of objects which would serve as *mbũgũ*, and which he had collected over a period of weeks in readiness for the making of a second divining gourd. He took with him some honey beer and poured it out as an offering to the spirits of departed *andũ ago*, and thus "bought" the new *mbũgũ* from them. At the same time he collected some *mũthakwa*, *mũkenia*, and *mũgere* wood, together with a *kvrago* bulb, and these he brought back to his courtyard.

Then he brought out his old divining gourd in its bag, and his old string bag of magic powders, and he laid these down on the string bag mat that he used for divination. This done, he put the new *mbũgũ* on to the mat and proceeded to make five more from the above mentioned four plants, making two of *mũthakwa* wood and one from each of the other plants. This done, he emptied out a large pile of *mbũgũ* from his old divining gourd, and he then went through these very carfully one by one, putting back into his old divining gourd all the *mbũgũ cia thenge* (those objects which

were taken from the he-goat at the initiation and made into *mbũgũ*). These on no account were to be transferred to the divining gourd for travelling.

He also put back into his old divining gourd other *mbũgũ* of his own choosing, but he took care to see that certain *mbũgũ* which he knew he might need for divining in far districts were in the pile which was to be transferred. In all he probably selected about one-fifth of his old *mbũgũ* (p.1201) to be transferred to the new divining gourd. Having made his selection, he placed the pile of old *mbũgũ* that were to be transferred as a nucleus for the travelling gourd next to the new *mbũgũ*, and then proceeded to prepare the new gourd that he had bought to make into a divining gourd.

This he did first by half filling it with honey beer and washing it out with this, and then by smoking it with wild olive wood. The new travelling divining gourd did not have a bead eye, nor was it branded with the owner's marks or punctured with an awl. To do these things to it would have been to put it on a level with the old divining gourd and make the old gourd jealous.

Next the *mũndũ mũgo* fetched the *mũimba-igũrũ* creepers that had been put with the honey beer while it was brewing overnight, as well as those that had been on the granary roof. From these he made a series of rings, which for the purpose of this ceremony were called *ngwaro*. These were legal substitutes for rawhide strips (*ngwaro*) from a slaughtered animal, and were used because no animal was sacrificed in this particular ceremony. The man first put one of these on his own right wrist, then one on to the neck of the old divining gourd, one on to his senior wife's left wrist, and one on each of the following of his old magic powder *mbũthũ* gourds: *ira*, *ũũmũ*, and *rũthuko*. Next he put a similar *rũkwaro* on the neck of the new divining gourd, and on new *mbũthũ* gourds of *ira* and *ũũmũ* powders, making nine *ngwaro* in all.

This done, he solemnly washed in honey beer all of the new *mbũgũ* and those old *mbũgũ* that were to be transferred to the new divining gourd. He then rubbed *ira* powder over all the *mbũgũ* that had been so washed, after which he rubbed them with a piece of white ewe fat or he-goat fat which he had kept for the purpose from some animal slaughtered in the last few weeks.

The whole of the new *mbũgũ*, and those old ones that were being transferred, were then put into the new divining gourd, which together with the new *mbũthũ* gourd of *ira* powder, was put into a new string bag. The *mũndũ mũgo* then took a small number of new *mbũthũ* gourds, and into these he put a proportion of the various powders in his existing *nbũthũ* gourds. He did not divide all his magic powders into two lots, but only those he was most likely to need when travelling. Henceforth, when he went on a journey he took with him the new travelling divining gourd and the new series of magic powders, leaving his main supply of magic powders at home.

Having prepared all of these, he hung the new and the old divining gourd, and the new and the old bag of magic powders, on the *kĩhanya* in his wife's hut. If the existing *klhanya* had not got four separate pegs, then had to cut another *mũthakwa* wood stem with additional pegs to (p.1202) implant in the ground next to the old *kĩhanya*. This, however, was seldom necessary. Having hung each bag on a separate peg. and poured out honey beer at the base of the *kĩhanya* with a prayer to the departed spirits to keep all these things safe, the ceremony was concluded.

Purification of a Divining Gourd that was Defiled

There were a number of circumstances which could cause a divining gourd to become delilcd in the manner called *thahu* (see Chapter 28) and if this happened; appropriate purification ceremonies had to take place just as though the divining gourd was a human being. These ceremonies will be described here rather than in the chapter on purification, since they were intimately connected with

the divining gourd itself. A divining gourd could acquire *thahu* in a number of ways, and the purification rites that became neccssary varied accordingly.

We will first of all deal with those forms of *thahu* that required the slaughter of a he-goat. If a rat or a mouse ate through the leather strap of the bag containing the divining gourd and so caused the bag and its contents to fall to the ground, this was not the divining gourd's fault, and it was not accused of trying to kill its owner, as it would have been if it had fallen without apparent cause. But a ceremony of purification was essential and a he-goat had to be slaughtered.

If the owner of a divining gourd was in the act of divining and he or one of his patients was suddenly seized with a desire to urinate or to relieve himself but forgot to put down the *mbũgũ* in his hand before going out to do so, he caused the divining gourd to be contaminated with *thahu* and a he-goat had to be slaughtered.

If a man who took his divining gourd out to the courtyard to divine for a patient noticed dust upon it, and he, or the patient, so far forgot himself as to blow the dust away, instead of wiping it off ceremonially, a he-goat had to be slaughtered.

If, while the the midst of divining for a patient or patients, a *mũndũ mũgo* or one of his patients should forget himself and take a mouthful of food from the dishes that had been brought out for breakfast, the guilty party had to supply a he-goat for slaughter in purification of the divining gourd, for he ought not to have eaten while actually at work divining·

If the *thahu* had been caused by a rat or a mouse eating through the strap of the string bag, the *mũndũ mũgo* at once set a small *ndua* gourd of honey beer to brew. He then selected a he-goat for slaughter on the morrow, and lie also invited a neighbouring *mũndũ mũgo* to come next morning and take part in the purification ceremony. Early next (p.1203) morning, he first of all prayed to the deity, telling him what had happened and asking for a blessing on the ceremony, and then poured out beer to him. Then he similarly made prayers and offerings to the departed spirits of members of the profession. This done, he awaited the coming of the other *mũndũ mũgo*.

When he had come, the he-goat was brought out and killed, and its blood was drawn off, but this was not used for any part of the ceremony, but was made into the normal black puddings. When the animal had been slaughtered and the joints cut up and put to roast, the divining gourd, its string bag, and the bag containing the *mbũthũ* gourds of magic powders were brought out and placed upon the mat used in divining, **N**ext the little *ndua* of honey beer was brought out, and first a *gĩtete* bottle gourd was filled from it to make the *mũguĩ* (blood and honey) for the two members of the profession. Then the first hornful of beer (*mahuti*) was poured off and sent to some relative of the owner of the divining gourd. This done, the two *andũ ago* each drank twice from the beer in the *gĩtete*, drinking from the mouth of the gourd, after which the rest of the beer in the *ndua* was poured off into *kĩnya* gourds and taken back to the hut. This done, the *mĩratina* loofahs were wrung out into a gourd drinking cup and laid aside under the eaves of the hut. Next the owner of the divining gourd had some of the beer in the *gĩtete* poured into another gourd vessel, and he proceeded to sip it and spit it on to *mũkeũ* leaves, with which he rubbed honey beer all over the outside of the defiled divining gourd so as to cleanse it. Using dry *mũkeũ* leaves he then wiped the whole of the surface of his divining gourd, after which he rubbed *ira* powder on its base and in a line up the whole length to its mouth. He put two pieces of olive wood into the fire that was roasting the he-goat, and when they were smoking he proceeded to smoke out the divining gourd and its contents of *mbũgũ*. Next he went over to where the he-goat was slaughtered and he got the two forelegs, the

scrotum, and part of the stomach, including that part called *gakuo kaingĩ* (the omasum, or third chamber of the stomach).

He made one rawhide strip from the scrotum and one from the stomach and put these on to the neck of the divining gourd. He made a strip from the skin of each of the two legs of the goat, and these he put on his own right wrist and his wife's left wrist. Then he divided up the *gakuo kaingĩ* and put a little bit of this on to the necks of the more important *mbũthũ* gourds containing the magic powders.

Having thus put on the rawhide strips, he took a lump of raw fat from the goat and rubbed it all over the divining gourd, and then cut it into two and put it inside the gourd. He then shook the gourd so as to make these bits of raw fat mix with the *mbũgũ* and purify them.

p.1204
Next he turned his attention to the new string bag which his wife had provided to take the place of the one whose strap had been eaten through. This new string bag had to have a plaited fibre handle instead of a leather strap so that the rats would not again eat through the handle and cause the divining gourd to fall. *Ira* powder was rubbed on its base and on its edges. The purified divining gourd was then put into the new bag, and it was hung up once more on the *kĩhanya*. The beer squeezed from the *mĩratina* and put under the eaves then had finger millet grain added to it, and this was poured out at the foot of the *kĩhanya* with a prayer for blessing on the divining gourd. The old string bag was put on the floor of the woman's hut to rot, and this concluded the ceremony

If the *thahu* incurred by the divining gourd was caused because the woman who was the guardian of the divining gourd had sexual intercourse in that hut with a man who was not her husband, the procedure was quite different.

The man who had been the cause of the trouble and had slept with the woman had to bring a fat he-goat to the *mũndũ mũgo's* home, and this was slaughtered by the owner of the divining gourd together with one or two other *andũ ago* who had been called in to assist. The ceremony was not elaborate and involved putting rawhide strips only on the divining gourd, its owner, the owner's wife, and the man who had had intercourse with her. Two strips were put on the divining gourd, one from the abdominal lining of the he-goat and one from the scrotum. Each of the people concerned had only one, and the strip that was put on the woman was put on her right wrist and not her left, as was usually the case. This was because she used her right hand to hang up the bag containing the divining gourd, so that it was that hand which had to wear the symbol of purification.

The man who had had intercourse with her had to go straight down to the river to wash after his rawhide strip had been put on to his wrist, and here he discarded it, after washing all over in running water. The owner of the divining gourd and his wife did not discard their strips until some days later, whereupon they were thrown under the wife's bed. Apart from the joint purification of the divining gourd and the parties concerned, the woman who had caused the *thahu* by allowing the sex act to take place in her hut had herself to be purified in a complicated manner. This ceremony will be described in Chapter 28.

If, when one *mũndũ mũgo* went to consult another concerning some sickness or other misfortune, the latter discovered by his divining that the divining gourd of the former had in some way acquired *thahu* and that this was the cause of the trouble, the following ceremony took place·

The owner of the unclean divining gourd brewed some honey beer, (p.1205) and on the following morning, after duly praying to both God and the departed spirits of members of the profession (in the way described above), he awaited the arrival of another *mũndũ mũgo* whom he had called in. No animal was slaughtered, and the purification ceremony consisted of emptying the divining gourd of all its *mbũgũ* and carefully washing them in specially prepared honey beer, after which they were anointed with *ira* powder and sheep's fat.

The divining gourd itself was also washed all over with honey beer, inside and outside, and then treated with wild olive smoke to cleanse it. Then both the neck of the divining gourd and the right wrist of the owner were encircled with a *rũkwaro* of *mũimba-igũrũ* creeper, to signify that the relationship between the two had been made normal again.

It sometimes happened that a child belonging to the hut where the divining gourd was kept made it unclean by doing something which was taboo. Thus if a child should place a gourd of water up against the *kĩhanya* where the divining gourd was hung, or if a child or any other person should take a lighted fire-brand to that part of the hut where the gourd was kept, instead of calling the owner to make a light with his ceremonial torch (*rũmũrĩ*), or if a child or any other person should be scratched by a branch or peg of the *kĩhanya* and thus cause blood to flow, a modified purification ceremony had to take place to remove the *thahu* from the divining gourd. For this purpose no animal had to be slaughtered unless the cause of the *thahu* had so reacted on the person responsible that it made him or her ill. In that case a ram had to be killed for the purification of the person, but not for the purification of the divining gourd.

The divining gourd itself was purified only by being washed all over with honey beer, anointed with *ira* powder, and then rubbed with mutton fat.

When a Divining Gourd was transferred to the Hut of the Second Wife

It sometimes happened that the senior wife of a *mũndũ mũgo* who had been made the guardian of his divining gourd discharged her duties in respect of the divining gourd so unsatisfactorily that her husband decided to relieve her of her responsibilities. Whether her failure was in respect of the sexual taboos, or in connection with keeping the fire lit each night, or whatever it was, after a time the *mũndũ mũgo* might decide that he had to take action, as his work was suffering in consequence. He then made his plans, without telling the woman who was the guardian, and he had a small quantity of honey beer brewed in the hut (p.1206) of the next senior wife. He then arranged for one or two other members of the profession to come next morning and assist in the transfer ceremony.

Early in the morning, as the sun rose, he made his prayers and offerings of beer to God and to the departed spirits, and then, whilst it was still very early and before the woman who was the present guardian of the divining gourd was up and about, he slaughtered a fat ram out the entrance to his homestead. Having done this, he set to roast such joints as were normally roasted, and wrapped the fat of the ram and the joints that were normally boiled in the skin, which was tied in a bundle with *mũkeũ* bark. Next he proceeded to his senior wife's hut, where the divining gourd was. At the doorway he put down his bundle but did not enter. Instead he called out to his wife to bring out the divining gourd, the bag containing his magic powders, and also the bag which was used as a mat in divining, saying as a reason for this that he had certain ceremonies which he had to perform at once.

His wife brought these things out without suspecting the reason for the demand, and he took them from her and handed her the bundle of meat and fat, saying, "Take these, I have bought the divining gourd from you". This was the first indication she received that she was to be deprived of her guardianship. The *mũndũ mũgo* then went over to the hut of his second senior wife and put the divining gourd and the bag of magic powders down on the divining mat outside her doorway. By then the other members of the profession who had been called in would have arrived, and the ceremony of installing the divining gourd in the hut of the other woman could begin.

The *mũndũ mũgo* took a live he-goat into the second wife's hut and then brought it out again and slaughtered it in front of her hut. This done, the honey beer that had been brewing in her hut was brought out and poured off, first into the *gĩtete* bottle gourd that was used for the *mũguĩ* of the members of the profession, then a hornful for the *mahuti* (the first hornful, which was sent to a relative), and finally a big *kĩnya* gourd to be taken at once to the wife who had been relieved of the guardianship of the divining gourd as a further "purchase price".

The senior wife was then called upon to drink a little beer and utter a blessing for the divining gourd, which had been taken from her care. This she did because she had to, and usually with very bad grace. Then the owner of the divining gourd tipped all the *mbũgũ* out on to the divining mat, and the divining gourd itself was washed all over with honey beer, after which it was marked with *ira* powder and rubbed over with raw fat from the he-goat. The *mbũgũ* that had been tipped out were similarly treated. In this ceremony, however, it was not smoked out and no goat's blood was put into it.

p.1207
When the *mbũgũ* had been cleansed, they were put back into the diving gourd again and the owner set up a *kĩhanya* or forked stick of *mũthakwa* wood (which he had cut in readiness) in the hut of the wife who was to become the new guardian. This *kĩhanya* had to be set up with all the ceremony which had attended the setting up of a *kihanya* in the first instance. Next the *mũndũ mũgo* cut a rawhide strip from the scrotum of the he-goat and put it on the neck of the divining gourd. He also put one from its right foreleg on his senior wife's right wrist, and one from the left foreleg on the right wrist of the woman who was to become the new keeper of the divining gourd. The new guardian was told to take up in her right hand the bag containing the gourd, while her husband took the bag with the magic powders, and together they went into the hut and hung up these things on the new *kĩhanya*, after which honey beer was poured out at the foot of the *kĩhanya* with finger millet grain. Next the *mũndũ mũgo* went out again, and he and the visiting *andũ ago* ate the roasted breast of the he-goat without using a knife, but by biting pieces off it as at the initiation of a *mũndũ mũgo*.

Then the rest of the meat of the goat was divided up and eaten by the members of the family and such guests as were present, after which the beer was drunk and the party broke up.

In the evening the owner of the divining gourd made a fire to burn some of the bones and stomach contents of the he-goat, and he put a small quantity of fresh honey beer to brew.

Next morning he poured this beer out over the fire where some of the bones had been burnt, and those that hadn't been were taken out and given to the new guardian of the divining gourd to grind to a powder, which was then dedicated as *thenge* powder. In this way the new guardian became finally and definitely associated with, and responsible for, all matters connected with the magic powders which were in her guardianship, as well as with the divining gourd.

If the woman who was the guardian of a divining gourd fell sick and was so old that it seemed certain that death was not far off, then a ceremony of transferring the gourd to the next senior wife took place in exactly the same way as described, save only that it was done with her knowledge and consent, and not secretly. This was done in order to avoid the possibility of the gourd being defiled by death, as then it could never again be kept in any woman's hut, but had henceforward to be kept in its owner's hut.

In the event that a divining gourd was being kept in the men's hut beause it had been defiled by the death of its keeper, any beer that was needed in connection with subsequent ceremonies was brewed in the next senior wife's hut, and in the morning when the ceremony took (p.1208) place, the divining gourd was taken over to that hut, but it was never left in her hut overnight, or in her guardianship, for this would cause her to risk having a similar fate to her predecessor, and die suddenly and unexpectedly.

Taboos connected with the Divining Gourd

1. In no circumstances could a *mũndũ mũgo* allow any member of his age-group to have sexual intercourse with the wife who was the guardian of his divining gourd. If there was nowhere else for a male guest to sleep he might be told to go and sleep in the hut where the divining gourd was kept, but he was warned that it was there, and that therefore he had to avoid all sexual contact with the woman even though she might be "an age-group wife".

2. If the wife of the *mũndũ mũgo* who kept the divining gourd was away for any reason, the *mũndũ mũgo* was not in any circumstances to sleep with any other woman in that hut.

3. The grown-up unmarried daughters of the woman in whose hut the divining gourd was kept were not in any circumstances to have restricted sexual intercourse with their lovers in that hut.

4. If a *mũndũ mũgo* had been away on a journey, no other *mũndũ mũgo* might touch his divining gourd until he had returned and slept one night with the wife who was its guardian.

5. Gourds containing water were never put near the divining gourd.

6. A fire in any form other than that of the *rũmũrĩ* torch was never to be used as a light near the divining gourd when it was hanging on the *kĩhanya*.

7. In the hut where the divining gourd was kept a fire had to burn all night. It did not matter if the fire went out by day, but from nightfall to dawn there had always to be a fire in the hut. If the woman in charge of the divining gourd found that the fire had gone out overnight, it had to be relit next morning by means of a fire stick, to the accompaniment of the slaughter of a ram.

8. The owner of the divining gourd had to take great care never to draw blood in anger or by accident from the wife who was the guardian.

9. If the woman in whose hut the divining gourd was kept died suddenly in her hut, she was for the time being spoken of as asleep, and meanwhile the divining gourd had to be moved to the men's hut. Her death was then recognised, and henceforward the divining (p.1209) gourd was kept in the men's hut. It was not later transferred to the hut of the next senior wife, for it had been in contact with the former keeper's death.

The Significance of Numbers

There can be very little doubt in the minds of those who have read this account of Kikuyu customs that a considerable significance was attached to certain numbers in the Kikuyu mind. Probably the most important number was nine and we find that nine was intimately concerned with most of the important ceremonies of life. Only a few examples need be quoted to illustrate this fact, which is borne out again and again in all the chapters of this book.

1. According to Kikuyu tradition, the tribe was divided into ten (but referred to as *kenda mũiyũru*—nine complete—it being taboo to count people in exact numbers) clans, derived from the ten daughters of Mũũmbi.

2. In connection with initiation ceremonies, the proceedings had to last nine days in all, that is to say, the initiates had to leave the lodge and go home on the ninth day from the start of the proceedings.

3. Initiation age-groups were banded together in groups of nine, which together made a single regiment age-group.

4. The ceremonies of *hukũra* which were connected with death were spread over nine days, the ninth being the day when they came to an end.

5. In most magical ceremonies of the purification type, bunches of nine different types of magic herb had to be used as brushes to wipe over the person being purified.

6. Generation age-groups were arranged in nine year cycles.

Examples such as these can be given almost indefinitely, and we find again and again that the ninth unit made a period complete. The reason for the sacredness and significance of the number nine is not hard to find, for the clue is to be found in the word which was used to mean nine. Whereas most Kikuyu numerals have an adjectival form and are used in agreement with the word they qualify, the word for nine (and also as we shall see the words for seven and ten) has not got an adjectival form, and is, in fact, a contraction of a sentence. The word is *kenda*, which is a contraction of *karĩ nda*, meaning "it is in the womb". The significance of nine lies, indeed, in the fact that a full and normal human birth takes place in the ninth month after conception.

p.1210
In contrast to nine, seven was for the Kikuyu a bad and unlucky number.

1. The number seven was constantly used in witchcraft.

2. It was taboo to do the same work for more than six consecutive days, i.e. to continue to a seventh day was very unlucky.

3. In taking oaths there had to be seven repetitions of the formulae, so that if the man taking the oath was perjuring himself he would put himself under the evil influence of the number seven.

4. The object on which an oath was sworn had seven holes in it

The word for seven, like that for nine, had no adjectival form but is a word having a meaning of its own, *mũgwanja* (the falling down in the courtyard), and it was commonly spoken of as *mũgwanja mũũru* (the bad number, seven).

In a very few cases the number seven was good, and not unlucky, but this was chiefly in connection with divining, and whereas it might denote good luck and success to the person who had gone to consult the diviner, this was only because it was indicating the reverse for some person or object who was the enemy of the person concerned. It might be said, therefore, that its good luck was derived from its bad luck.

The numbers four and five had special significance in connection with male and femaleness respectively.

1. The period of seclusion for a woman who had given birth to a girl was five days, while for one who had borne a son, it was four days.

2. When boys and girls went to the *mũgumo* tree to get fig leaves in the ceremony which opened the initiation rites, each girl had to have five leaves and each boy four.

3. In divining, the number four had a male significance and the number five a female one.

4. When a committee of men, warriors or elders, were appointed for any purpose, there were always four or a multiple of four.

The number ten and multiples of ten were symbols of completeness.

1. Marriage insurance payments were reckoned in units of ten.

2. Compensation for manslaughter or murder was always reckoned in units often.

3. If a payment of part of an amount was made, care had to be taken that the part payment was not an exact amount of ten or a multiple of ten, as that would signify completeness in something that was, in fact, incomplete.

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Introduction

In the preceding chapter we have examined the practices of magic and divination as they were carried out by members of a recognised profession for the benefit of the community. This we may term the practice of beneficial magic, and there can be no doubt at all that the *andũ ago* (medicine-men) were people whose profession served an important function in the life of the community.

However, not all magic was with good intent, and there were people who practised a very different form of magic which we may call witchcraft. Whereas beneficial magic (ũgo) was practised openly, witchcraft (ũrogi) was never helpful to the person or persons against whom it was directed and was usually practised in secret.

In its extreme forms witchcraft was practised with the intent to kill those against whom it was directed. People who practised these extreme forms of witchcraft were regarded as public enemies, and whenever they were discovered they were put to a violent death. But by no means was all witchcraft of this extremely violent form. We shall therefore have to consider several quite distinct forms of witchcraft, distinguished on the one hand by their ultimate objectives, and on the other by the types of people who practised them.

Witchcraft Practised with Intent to Kill

Among the Kikuyu the practice of witchcraft with the intent to kill was forbidden by law, and strongly objected to by the public, and in consequence, those who practised it were in constant fear for their lives. It was therefore not possible to find people who could give me accurate details of this form of witchcraft, for even if I could have found such a person, he or she would never have admitted to being a mũrogi, and still less have consented to describe the methods employed.

There is no doubt whatever that a small proportion of andũ ago (*m*edicine-men) turned to ũrogi (witchcraft), in some cases practising openly as ago and at the same time secretly practising ũrogi. It is most probable that these men resorted to poisoning, and thus, in part, the (p.1212)

methods used by the *arogi* to kill those whom they were paid to kill were not magical at all, but consisted simply of the clever use of poisons.

On the other hand, the Kikuyu themselves had a firm belief in the power of the *arogi* to kill simply by means of spells and charms, and more particularly by evil charms so placed that the victim walked over them, thereby becoming contaminated by their influence. According to hearsay and general Kikuyu belief, one common method of killing people by *ũrogi* was by putting the evil magic powders into a man's beer. Although the cause of death in such cases was probably poison Kikuyu belief did not distinguish between poison, in a medical sense, and magic. They regarded all poison as witchcraft, and held that it was not necessarily the poison that had caused death, but the evil spells cast over the powders.

A man who wished to kill an enemy would secretly obtain a small quantity of poison powder from a dealer in witchcraft. When he heard of a beer drink that he knew his enemy would attend he hid this powder in a bit of banana leaf and tucked it under one of his armlets of coiled wire. At the beer drink, he waited until everyone had had sufficient drink to make them fuddled and unobservant, and then emptied this powder into a drinking hornful of beer and handed it to his enemy, who drank it unsuspectingly.

Such powders that were used as poison were, so far as it was possible to ascertain, made up of a number of ingredients, only one of which was an actual poison. The others were things associated with death, and owed their power to this association and to spells. It was widely held among the Kikuyu that dealers in witchcraft used to cut flesh from dead bodies that had been put out in the *kĩbĩrĩra* for the hyenas to eat, and many old men told how, when they went next morning to the *kĩbĩrĩra* to see if the body they had put out had been eaten, they found instead that much of its flesh had been cut off with a knife. It was a recognised practice for people to examine bodies that had been put in the *kĩbĩrĩra* on the following morning simply in order to make sure that the flesh had not been cut off in this way. If and when it was found that a dealer in witchcraft had been there in the night and cut flesh from the corpse, all members of the family took extreme precautions against witchcraft, being certain that someone was plotting to use this art against them.

Apart from actual poisoning, it was believed that a common way of putting a witchcraft spell upon an enemy was to get a *mũrogi* to *handa nyambo*. This was done by dipping small pointed wooden pegs into witchcraft powders, casting a spell upon them by means of a witchcraft formula, and planting them at night in the thatch of the (p.1213) the roof of the hut where the victim slept, in the pathway leading to his homestead, and by the bank of the stream from which the water for that homestead was normally drawn. It was believed that such *nyambo* (pegs) would have an evil effect only upon the person against whom the spells had been directed.

Another means of destroying a person was to take some of his or her hair, finger-nail parings, or spittle to a *mũrogi*, who would destroy them by fire to the accompaniment of spells and incantations. If this was correctly done, and if the proposed victim did not have potent charms to protect him against such spells, he would waste away and die in a very short time.

Detection and Removal of Witchcraft with Intent to Kill

When the head of a family found that sickness, death, and other misfortunes were falling constantly upon the members of his family, he suspected that possibly witchcraft had been made against him

with a view to exterminating him and driving him out of the district in despair. If this happened, and if he was satisfied that the cause of all his trouble, and of the deaths that had taken place, was not the anger of departed spirits nor of God, he consulted a specialist in divining in some more or less distant area where he was not known.

The diviner sometimes assured him that *Urogi* was not the trouble, but sometimes, too, he was able to state that certainly "*ũrogi*" was the cause, and then he either arranged to come and destroy the witchcraft himself, or else named some other member of the profession who should carry out the ceremony.

The medicine-man arranged to come on a particular day, and the man whose homestead was to be treated arranged for a large gathering of inhabitants from the village where his homestead was situated to be present as witnesses to the proceedings. When the medicine-man arrived carrying his bag of magic powders he did not at first enter the homestead, but waited outside in the entrance area and demanded a small fee, such as a bar of Magadi soda or a he-goat skin, to be paid in advance. Having been given this, he took out his own charm (*gĩthitũ*) contained in a Thomsons' gazelle horn, anointed it with magic powders, and addressed it, telling it to find the *ũrogi*. He then cast it at random, and where it fell he called upon the men of the family to come and dig. Here, sure enough, they found some unusual object such as a large snail shell, or a wooden peg of *mũrika* wood, which they were (p.1214) assured was one of the objects of witchcraft that was causing the trouble. The medicine-man then went into the homestead, and standing a long way from each hut in turn, starting with the men's hut, he cast his *gĩthitũ* at each hut, and then went over to see how and where it had fallen. From this examination he could tell whether or not that hut had had some object of witchcraft planted upon it, and if so, exactly where, and he instructed some of the members of the family where to look for it. Sure enough, they again found some unusual object just where they were told to look—in the thatch, on the ground by the entrance to the hut, or in some other place. At some of the huts the medicine-man said, "There is no *ũrogi* here", and passed on to his examination of the next hut. When all the huts had been so examined and the objects of witchcraft removed from them, these were all placed in a pile in the centre of the courtyard, and the medicine-man placed his bag of magic powders in the hut of his host to await night-fall.

After dark he continued his search. He broke off a lump of his *rũmũrĩ* candle, which he used as his magic torch, and impaled this on an iron awl. Carrying the light, he started to walk slowly all round the outside confines of the homestead. Every now and then the light suddenly went out, and wherever it did so he called upon the men who were accompanying him to dig. They found in the ground some unusual object. These were stated to be objects of witchcraft, and were added to the pile in the centre of the courtyard. Then he directed some men to lead him down to the stream or spring where the water for this homestead was normally drawn, and here, too, he used his *rũmũrĩ* torch to find the spot where the *ũrogi* objects were hidden. After this everyone retired for the night, and next morning the head of the homestead was called upon to provide a virgin ewe for slaughter. This animal was killed to provide undigested stomach contents, and all the objects of *ũrogi* that had been unearthed were well rubbed with these and thrown away. After this, some stomach contents were sprinkled at every spot where the objects had been found. The meat of the animal was then eaten by the members of the family and the medicine-man.

That evening, after all the flocks and herds belonging to the homestead had come home for the night, and after all residents of the homestead were within their huts, the medicine-man demanded a young he-goat. He took this and his bag of magic powders once round the outside of the homestead in a counter-clockwise direction. This he-goat was then put into the hut of the senior

wife of the homestead for the night, where there was already some honey beer brewing by the (p.1215) orders of the medicine-man. The bag of magic powders was put back in the men's hut, where the medicine-man slept.

Early next morning the medicine-man fetched the same goat and his powders, and went round the homestead in a clockwise direction, after which the he-goat was brought into the courtyard and slaughtered. From this he-goat he removed the fourth chamber of the stomach (*ngerima*), the omentum or fatty membranous lining of the abdominal cavity (*rũambũ*), and the brainbox. Into the *ngerima* and into the brain-box he put the following magic powders: *kĩnoria*, *thiari*, *rũthuko*, *ũũmũ*, and *thenge*. The brainbox was then wrapped up in the *rũambũ*.

While the rest of the meat was roasting, the medicine-man took a long stick of sugar-cane of the *nyamũirũ* variety, and another of the *nyamwerũ* variety, a stem of *mũthakwa* wood, and a log of dry wood cut from a tree near a public pathway. He bored a hole in the centre of the latter, and placed in it some of each of the following magic powders: *njeehũ*, *ikũnja*, *ũũmũ*, *gĩtuma*, and on top of these *rũthuko*, *mũcanjamũka* and *thiari*. The hole was then sealed with beeswax. He cut from the sugar-cane and *mũthakwa* stems a number of short pegs, into each of which he bored a hole which he filled with the same powders as he had put into the log, and in the same order. The powders put in first were to ward off evil, and those put in on the top were good powders to encourage fertility, health, and wealth.

These preparations having been made, he dug a hole for the log across the entrance to the homestead, and buried it there so that all who entered or left had to walk over it. The prepared pegs of sugarcane and *mũthakwa* stem were then hidden in the thatch of each of the huts in the homestead, and in the ground round and about the outside of the homestead.

That evening, when all the stock was home, and all members of the family were in, the medicine-man built a great bonfire in the centre of the courtyard, on to which he placed the *ngerima* and the brainbox of the goat, together with all its bones, its stomach contents, and some each of the magic powders that had been put into the *ngerima*. This bonfire was lit with a fire drill, and all the family, including any who were sick, and all the stock, circled round it so that they might be purified by the smoke.

On the following day the medicine-man prepared as many torches as there were huts in the homestead. These torches were made of and *mũtei* and *mũkeũ* wood, together with twigs of the sweet-smelling *makũri*, and into each torch he put a quantity of each of the following magic powders: *ũũmũ*, *mũcanjamũka*, *rũthuko*, *ng'ondu*, and *thiari*.

p.1216
In the evening he drilled a fire and set fire to a small pile of wild olive wood in the centre of the courtyard. He then lit all these torches in the fire, one by one, and took them into the various huts, starting with the men's hut, and then each of the women's huts in order of seniority. In each hut he went all round the dark corners, lighting them up with his torch and saying: "*Ndamũrĩka mũthaiga gũkũ gũthahũke*" (I give light with my magic powders that the place may cease to be ceremonially unclean). Having carried the torch all round the corners of the hut, including the beds and storeroom, he placed the torch on the fire of the hut and proceeded to the next hut.

Next morning he was given a fee of one virgin ewe and some goat skins, but before going home, he said that he would return after three planting seasons, and if his work had been successful, that

is, if the witchcraft and its effects had been destroyed and the homestead and its residents were flourishing, he would demand a further fee of a fat he-goat and another virgin ewe.

Penalties for using Witchcraft with Intent to Kill

Those people who used ***ũ****rogi*, whether in the form of poison or magic, to kill their enemies, their rivals, or rich men from whom there was a chance of inheriting wealth, were seldom content to commit murder in this way but once, for having discovered how easy it seemed to be, they were tempted to do it again.

In many cases, therefore, it was comparatively easy to discover the criminal. As soon as there was the slightest suspicion that witchcraft was being used in any district, the strictest watch was kept on the movements of people who were even slightly suspect, and in the course of time they were usually caught red-handed. This done, the only penalty was death. They were either stoned to death or burnt alive, and even their nearest relatives took part in the killing, thankful to get rid of so dangerous a person.

The people who supplied the witchcraft and poison were seldom detected, for they were much more careful and watchful than those who made use of their arts, and it was rare for them to give themselves away.

Occasionally a man who wished to make use of *ũrogi* to kill an enemy would approach a person whom he believed to be a dealer in witchcraft, (p.1217) but who, in fact, was perfectly innocent of such things. In such cases it was customary for the person so approached to make arrangements for a secret meeting at a later date, and to hide several witnesses to bear for themselves this request for poison or witchcraft, and so make no mistake as to who was the guilty party. There seems little doubt that occasionally those who actually did deal in witchcraft or poison would begin to wonder if they were becoming suspect, and in order to save their own skins and free themselves from suspicion, would occasionally betray a would-be murderer by arranging for his request for witchcraft to be overheard by witnesses. In this way the dealer in witchcraft could not only free himself of suspicion, but also get rid of someone whom he had reason to fear as one who might later repent of his crimes and denounce him as a dealer in witchcraft spells.

Witchcraft Practised with Intent to Punish

A quite distinct form of witchcraft from that described in the preceding pages was that directed against "some person or persons unknown", and not against a specific individual.

It happened from time to time that a man was grievously wronged and could not discover for certain who was responsible. For example, if a man had sheep or goats stolen from his flocks again and again while they were out grazing and failed to discover the thief, or if a member of his family was murdered, and although he suspected a particular family, he had no proof, and so could not take the case to court and claim blood money, or again, if a man found that sugarcane was continually being stolen from one of his more distant sugarcane fields and could not catch the thief, he might resort to punitive witchcraft.

In any of these or similar circumstances, the aggrieved party could do one of two things. He could either arrange for a ceremony of *kũringa thenge*, in which a curse was laid upon the thief, or he could turn to one of the recognised forms of witchcraft. In such cases his use *ũrogi* was not a crime, and was not punishable, for the steps which he took were not directed against any specified person, but simply against some unknown person who had acted in a way contrary to the law, yet against

whom there was no evidence. There were a number of distinct types of *ũrogi* that could be made use of in such circumstances.

p.1218

Witchcraft as Practised by a Mwĩthaga

Members of the *Aithaga* clan were believed to have the power to give potent curses. This power was not voluntary, and was inherited by all members of the clan to a greater or lesser extent.

Those members of the clan who made special use of their inherited powers reinforced their curses with a publicly performed ceremony. Aside from enhancing the potency of the curse, by performing the ceremony publicly there could be no subsequent suggestion that the person requesting the deed had caused a curse or spell to be put upon a named person, which was illegal and punishable by death.

Having made arrangements with the *Mwĩthaga* to come and utter his curses and make his spells on a given day, an invitation was publicly made to all members of the village, as well as to anyone who cared to come from neighbouring villages, to attend and witness the ceremony.

The *Mwĩthaga* arrived, bringing with him an old cooking pot, and he led the assembly to a place where two public pathways crossed. He informed them that he had been called in to put a curse on the person or persons who had stolen so-and-so's sheep or killed a member of so-and-so's family, as the case might be. This done, he went off to the river and drew water in a green banana leaf, and also collected a bunch of dry banana leaves, a bunch of leaves and stems of the *mũcege* plant, an unripe gourd, and two leafy *mũgere* sticks.

By the time he returned with these things everybody who had assembled to watch the ceremony of cursing was talking excitedly, recalling anecdotes of how potent this form of cursing was, and how so-and-so and so-and-so's family were wiped out as the result of such a curse. If the guilty party or any friend who knew of his or her guilt was present, the effect of such talk was so terrifying that a confession was forthcoming at once, in order to prevent the curse from being uttered. A public confession having been made, the elders present formed themselves at once into a court of justice under the senior council elder present, and the cursing ceremony was abandoned in favour of legal procedure.

If no one present came forward with a confession, the cursing ceremony proceeded. Very solemnly the *Mwĩthaga* stuck his two *mũgere* sticks into the ground on either side of the pathway, and tied their leafy tops together over the middle of the path. To the archway thus formed he affixed his bundle of dry banana leaves and his bundle of *mũcege* plants. He also tied the banana leaf container of water to the (p.1219) middle of this arch. Then he lit a small fire in the centre of the pathway underneath the arch, and on this he placed his cooking pot with unripe gourd inside. He stoked up the fire, and in a short time the heat of *the* dry pot caused the gourd to burst with a loud pop. As this happened the *Mwĩthaga* said, "May the person or people who stole from *so*-and-so (or who killed so-and-so) burst and perish like that, may his children perish like that, may his flocks and herds perish like that, may his homestead perish like that, may his wives perish like that".

Then he punctured the banana leaf containing the water so that it poured out into the red hot pot below, and caused it to sizzle loudly *as* it cooked and as the steam rose. As he did so he again cursed the culprit, saying, "May the person or people who stole from so-and-so (or killed so-and-so), get cold like this, may his children grow cold like this, may his stock grow cold like this, may his homestead grow *cold* like this, may his wives grow cold like this".

Next he took a fire-brand and set fire to the dry banana leaf and to the bunch of *mũcege* plants, saying as he did so, "May that person burn up thus, may his children burn up thus, may his stock burn up thus, may his homestead burn up thus, may his wives burn up thus". Then he put into the pot water which he had brought in an edible arum leaf and which was partly or wholly derived from dew and rain which had collected in the leaves of the edible arum during the night. This water was called *maĩ ma merera* (water that has collected). He dipped the burning banana leaf and the burning *mũcege* plants into this water, saying, "May he die out thus, may his children die out thus, may his stock die out thus, may· his homestead die out thus, may his wives die out thus".

Then he tied the two extinguished bundles to the top of a long pole and set it in the ground so that these bundles were flapping in the breeze. He then uttered his final curses, "May he wave about aimlessly thus, may his children wave about aimlessly thus, may his stock wave about aimlessly thus, may his homestead wave about aimlessly thus, may his wives wave about aimlessly thus".

The ceremony then ended, and all the people gathered about to talk of what they had seen and heard, and there was little doubt that guilty parties would very soon hear of the curses that had been put upon them. The *Mwĩthaga* was paid a fee of several goatskins and went home, but early the next morning he conducted the final part the cursing ceremony.

He collected a number of young boys of his own family and others his own clan, and went with them early in the morning to a *mũgumo* (p.1220) tree. Here he made the boys drop their skin cloaks and climb naked into the tree. He then repeated a series of curses, and the boys in the tree chanted a refrain.

Mwĩthaga:	Ugai mũndũ ũcio na andũ ake maanyua maĩ, maromathũũra.
	Say, that when that person and his family drink Water may it hate them (i.e. harm them).
Boys' Refrain:	*Maromathũũra.*
	May it hate them.
Mwĩthaga:	*Ugai mũciĩ wake ũromera maarĩki.*
	Say, may castor oil plants grow in his homestead (These were often found growing on the site of a deserted homestead.)
Boys'Refrain:	*Ũromera maarĩki.*
	May castor oil plants grow there.
Mwĩthaga:	*Ugai marĩa irio iromathũũra.*
	Say, when they eat food, may it hate them.
Boys' Refrain:	*Iromathũra.*
	May it hate them.
Mwĩthaga:	*Ugai indo ciake irothira.*
	Say, may all his possessions perish.
Boys' Refrain:	*Irothira*.
	May they perish.

In due course one of two things happened. When the guilty person or persons heard of the curses and spells that had been put upon them, either they feared the consequences and made a public confession, pleading that the curse be removed and annulled, or else they decided to ignore the curse, hoping that it would not work and that they would escape. But there was no escape. To every family sickness, death, and other troubles come sooner or later, and the psychological effect of the curse was such that, at the first sign of sickness, or at the first death in their home, they began to think, "this is the curse starting to work", and soon lost their courage and determination to ignore it. Once those who had been cursed had owned up, they paid the *Mwĩthaga* a further fee, and he annulled the curse. He also received an additional fee from the man who had called him in in the first instance.

Removing the Curse of a Mwĩthaga

The curses described above could be laid upon a person and his family only by a member of the *Aĩthaga* clan, and they could similarly be (p.1221) annulled only by a member of that clan. If possible, the man who put curse on a family had to be called in himself to remove it, but otherwise it might be removed by some other member of the clan.

Public opinion would not allow the curse to be annulled until the family whose guilt had been proved by their own confession had paid in full for the crime they had committed, or at least had made a promise to pay in full and had given a token payment. Then a man of the *Aĩthaga* clan was called, and he appointed a day to come and start the lengthy public ceremony. For this day beer had to be brewed by the family concerned.

The *Mwĩthaga* brought with him one of his own cooking pots, and a *kĩnandũ* gourd containing castor oil and fat mixed with his own spittle, this being the chief ingredient needed to remove the curse. First of all he demanded a virgin ewe, which he led once round the homestead counter-clockwise and once clockwise. He then brought it into the courtyard, where he anointed its forehead with the mixture in his *kĩnandũ* gourd. This done, the head of the family and each of his wives and children had to come in turn and rub their foreheads against this ewe's forehead, and as they did so, they repeated the formula, "*Ndetiirĩra mũnyaka*" (I support good fortune for myself).

The ewe was then taken out to the entrance beyond the gateway of the homestead and it was there slaughtered and cut up. While this was being done, all the women of the homestead were sent to the river to bring up two *mbũthũ* bottle gourds of water each, and one of them had also to bring water in two banana leaves.

While the women were fetching water, the *Mwĩthaga* was preparing a replica of the arch and paraphernalia used in making the curse, including his pot, a green gourd, a bunch of banana leaves, a bunch of leaves and stems of the *mũcege* plant, and two leafy *mũgere* sticks. He rubbed some of the stomach contents of the ewe all over these objects, saying as he did so, "*Ndahoria ũrogi wakwa ũrĩa ndarogire andũ aya naguo*" (I make cold the witchcraft of mine which I used to curse these people).

By the time he had completed this work, the women were back from the river, and he had them dig small basin-shaped holes in front of each of their huts. These he lined with banana leaves, and into each such basin he put a little of the water brought from the stream in the banana leaves, and filled up the basins with water from the gourds. Then into each basin he put a little of the stomach contents of the ewe, together with a little of the mixture which he had in his *kĩnandũ* gourd.

Before he started the ceremony of purifying each individual, he demanded his fee of one he-goat and a virgin ewe. Having duly (p1222) received these, he carried out a purification ceremony by the *tahĩkia* (cleansing) process. If the family was a large one, he asked the local medicine-man to help him, but in this case the medicine-man merely acted as an assistant, and he did not use any of his own magic powders in the ceremony, for nothing but the contents of the *Mwĩthaga's kĩnandũ* gourd would be of any avail.

The head of the family and his senior wife were first purified, and then all the rest of the family one by one. Having purified (*tahĩkia*) them, the *Mwĩthaga* anointed each of them with *ira* powder and with some of the contents of his *kĩnandũ* gourd. He then demanded a fat ram for slaughter. This ram was slaughtered in the centre of the courtyard, and its fat was set to be rendered down. Before the ram was killed it was given a mixture of three magic powders to swallow, *ũũmũ*

rũthuko, and *ng'ondu*. All *Aĩthaga* who practised the art of cursing bought these powders from medicine-men and kept a supply for this purpose.

After the ram had been killed and its meat cut up, the *Mwĩthaga* put a little of each of these powders into the palm of his right hand, and made circular passes clockwise and counter-clockwise round the joints as they were roasting on the roasting platform, after which he sprinkled the powders over the meat as it cooked. When the joints were cooked he rubbed some more magic powder well into the breast (*gĩthũri*) and one of the half-saddle joints (*ikengeto*). He then summoned the head of the family, and sitting down opposite each other, they ate the meat of the breast without touching it with a knife, passing it from one to the other and tearing off pieces with their teeth.

Then the half-saddle joint was cut up into many small pieces, and these were put into a half-gourd and passed round for each member of the family of ali ages and sexes to eat. While the rest of the meat was being roasted and eaten, the *Mwĩthaga* called for a new bottle gourd, and into this he put some castor oil, some honey, and some of the ram's rendered down fat. To this mixture he added some of the contents of his own *kĩnandũ* gourd, and shook it well to mix them thoroughly. He then produced a porcupine quill which he had brought with him, and this he affixed to the stopper of the new *kĩnandũ* gourd. He presented this to the head of the family and told him that next day he was to dip the quill into the mixture in the bottle and lick it, and then dip in again and again so that all members of his family might have a lick.

After this the *Mwĩthaga* went home, taking his fees with him, and the family was free from the curse that had been laid upon them. Moreover, as a result of this ceremony, they were all henceforward immune from the effects of any other *Mwĩthaga* curse.

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Witchcraft Practised by Warriors to Punish Maidens

Members of the warrior classes (*aanake*) had, as we have seen in Chapter 18, certain rights *and* privileges, including the right to have restricted sexual intercourse with the unmarried initiated girls, and the right to order the girls to cut firewood for their nightime dances.

It sometimes happened that a few of the girls in a territorial unit resented the orders of the warriors and defied them, in which case it was customary for the warriors to *roga airĩtu acio atũrĩku* (make witchcraft against those unruly maidens). They found a place where the root of a tree was exposed across a public pathway, and removed it by cutting it on either side of the path. As they cut it with their swords they named the girls upon whom they were placing the witchcraft spell, and said, "*Marotuĩka ũguo*" (May they become thus). Then they took a round pebble brought from a stream for the purpose, and each took a mouthful of grass, spat this over the stone, and buried it in the middle of the path where the root had been. As they did so, they said, "*Twaroga* (so-and-so) *aage maciaro*" (We bewitch (so-and-so) so that she may bear no children), and they went through the names of all the girls on whom they were casting the spell.

It was believed that by doing this these girls would either be rendered temporarily sterile, or else when they conceived their children would all be still-born. Consequently, when any married girl proved to be sterile, or if her children were still-born, it was customary for her husband and parents to suspect *ũrogi wa aanake* (the witchcraft spells of the warriors), and the warriors were paid a fee of a he-goat to remove the spell.

An alternative way in which warriors cast a spell upon maidens whom they wished to punish was to dig a hole in the centre of a pathway or dancing field, and bury a stone which they had spat grass all over.

Yet another method was to go to a place where the girls of that area were in the habit of washing themselves before dances, and collect some of the *mũkeũ* leaves which they had used to wipe themselves with. These they wrapped, together with a stone, in an edible arum leaf, and bound with *mũriĩra* roots. This little bundle was then buried under the pathway leading to the washing place. All the girls named who stepped over this object would be affected by its spell, while those who had not been named would not be affected.

For an explanation of how these curses were removed, see Chapter 14 under "Barrenness as a Result of Curses by the Warriors".

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Witchcraft Practised by Senior Warriors to Punish Juniors

In the warrior regiments, the senior warriors who belonged to the older divisions of the regiment were very jealous of their rights and privileges, and they seriously resented it if the *muumo* (newly initiated warriors) tried to usurp any of these rights, or were in any way assertive and disrespectful to their elders and betters.

If the seniors decided that certain of the *muumo* warriors were altogether out of hand, they had the right to make witchcraft spells against them to punish them. The effect of these spells was to make all whom they were directed against failures in war and raiding, and generally lacking in strength and prowess. The young warriors so afflicted, when they realised what had happened, went to the seniors, asked for pardon, and paid a fat ram to have the effects of the evil spell removed.

If a particular young warrior was really hated intensely, the senior warriors waited till they were eating meat with him, and then sent him on an errand for a few minutes, and while he was away they each addressed and cursed a piece of meat. When the young man returned, suspecting nothing, he was given the meat to eat. After that nothing could save him, and in the next raid that he went on into Maasai country he was certain to be killed by the Maasai.

If the young man was to be put under a spell to punish him, but not with any intent to kill him, there were several other ways of cursing him. One method was for the senior warriors to mark an immature gourd with seven white stripes of *ira* powder, place it on the ground in their midst, and all draw their swords and simultaneously slash it. The little bits were collected, and buried with a stone in a hole dug in a public pathway along which he was sure to pass at some time or other. From the day that he walked across this spot he would start to lose his strength and to grow weak and thin, and at last, realising what was the cause, he would come to the senior warriors begging them to remove the spell. He had to pay one ram and one he-goat, and they removed the spell by the same means as those used in removing the witchcraft spell from a maiden (see Chapter 14).

An alternative method was to cut a root that crossed a public pathway—such a root was called *mũkĩra-hiti*—and bury the piece of root in a hole along the same path, together with a round stone. From the day the man passed along that path he would start to grow weak and ill.

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Yet another method was to collect some of the intended victim's spittle, and bury this with a stone in a public pathway.

Sometimes the leaders of the senior division of a warrior regiment decided that the whole of the junior division that had been recently initiated were altogether above themselves, and they arranged for a witchcraft ceremony to cast a spell upon them all to prevent them from having any success in raids on the Maasai. In this case the seniors collected a number of leaves that the young warriors had used in washing themselves at the streams when preparing for dances, and they also collected a little of the red ochre that the young warriors had left at the stream after anointing themselves. These things were wrapped up in a *mũtũndũ* leaf together with a small stone. Then, when there was a dance about to take place, they arranged for the young warriors to dance by themselves for one round, under the pretext of being busy with important discussions as to a forthcoming raid.

The young warriors, all unsuspecting and delighted at the opportunity of a round of dancing with the girls without the seniors, settled down to their dancing, and meanwhile one of the senior warriors carried the bundle that had been prepared round them once. The seniors then buried it at the foot of a *mũtũndũ* tree with the following spell, "*Twarinda muumo wage itaha*" (We bury the young warriors that they may lack the spoils of war).

After this had been done, the young warriors found that whenever they went on a raid with the seniors, the latter had all the success and they had none. Eventually they were so fed up that they consulted a diviner as to the cause of their lack of success and he told them that the senior warriors had cast a spell upon them.

The leaders of the junior warriors then approached the seniors, and after the juniors promised to pay a large fee for the whole of the junior division, the seniors agreed to remove the spell by digging up the bundle and rubbing it over with the stomach contents of a ram killed for the purpose. After the leaders had done this, all the warriors of the whole regiment were called together, and the juniors produced **a**ll the rams and he-goats that they had been told to raise as a fee for their release from the spell. All the warriors feasted together, and then seniors called for blessings upon the juniors and uttered words of blessing, "May the young warriors now have success in war, may they kill many of the enemy, may they raid many cattle". The junior warriors were then directed by the seniors to arrange with the elders to perform a ceremony of *kuohora aanake* (to untie the warriors—see Chapter 25), and after this they went raiding and were successful.

In connection with this and other forms of witchcraft used as (p.1226) punishment, if the victim did not suffer in the expected way, it was thought that he had a charm which nullified all such witchcraft, so faith in the *ũrogi* was not in the least impaired.

Preventative Witchcraft as Practised by a Blacksmith

Whereas the witchcraft that was made by warriors and members of the *Aĩthaga* clan was primarily used as a means of punishment, the form of witchcraft that was made by blacksmiths, was primarily preventative, although it was sometimes also, used as a form of punishment against an unknown person.

A blacksmith was usually requested to practice witchcraft in order to protect crops from thieves and prevent unauthorized persons from cutting down bushland and forest. Thus a man who had planted sugar-cane or another crop at a considerable distance from his homestead would call in a blacksmith to perform a ceremony of witchcraft cursing in order that any person who stole from that crop should suffer and perhaps even die. Any blacksmith was able to make witchcraft of this type, his spells and curses being potent by the mere fact that he was a blacksmith.

A person who wanted witchcraft of this protective type would brew beer and invite a blacksmith to come and drink it, at which time he told him of his requirements. No fee was payable at that time, but the blacksmith would appoint a day to carry out the ceremony with this man. The blacksmith took with him his hammer (*kĩriha*), his tongs (*mĩĩhato*), and some old bellow's nozzles. As they went to the area to be protected, the blacksmith called out loudly at every village and homestead they passed, saying that he was going to put witchcraft upon so-and-so's field or piece of land, and this information was, of course, passed on to all, so that in a short time everyone in the district knew that the man had called in a blacksmith to make witchcraft to protect his sugar-cane or yams, as the case might be. Having arrived at the plot, the blacksmith proceeded first of all to go round it counter clockwise once, carrying his tools and the old bellows' nozzles with him. Having come back to the place from which he started, he held one of the old clay nozzles in front of him and seven times inserted his hammer head into the hole in the nozzles, saying out loud as he did so, "May any person who steals from this field (or who cuts trees from this land) be consumed by this *thenge* (curse—see Chapter 23)". The nozzles were then left in a conspicuous position on a stick. The ceremony (p.1227) was very simple, but very effective, for the fear of a curse so uttered by a blacksmith was great.

fhe man who had requested that the curse be made warned all members of his own family in very solemn terms not to cut sugar-cane or wood in that area, or to dig yams, as the case might be, for even they would not be exempt from the evil effects of the witchcraft.

Having made this protective magic—which, incidentally, was made only if the crop or the bushland was to be left untouched for two or three years, as was normal with a newly planted sugar-cane or yam crop (both of which are slow growing)—the owner went from time to time with the blacksmith to make inspections. Should they find that in spite of the protective magic, someone had stolen from the plot, the blacksmith acted promptly. If it was a sugar-cane crop, he dug up the root of one of the stems that had been stolen, and if it was a sapling or tree, he dug up the stump that had been left. If it was yams, he dug up the whole plant, took one small tuber from its base, and destroyed the rest. He then went back to his smithy with this object, burned a hole in it and tied a string through the hole, and suspended it from the roof of his smithy. Each morning when he started work and when there were a number of people present, he took down the various objects which were suspended from the rafters (he usually had several from a number of customers' fields), and proceeded to utter the appropriate curses, for example, "May the person who stole from so-and-so's bushland after I had made witchcraft to protect it die thus", and as he said this he plunged a piece of hot metal into water, or placed a piece of red hot iron on his anvil and with a hammer and chisel cut it into halves. He proceeded thus, uttering these very specific curses for all to hear, and having heard them, they spread the news wherever they went.

Sooner or later the thief heard of what had happened, and began to worry. No doubt he believed in the efficacy of these curses, but when he stole from the plot he had not noticed the "sign of witchcraft", that is, the broken nozzles, for had he noticed them he would never have dared to steal. Possibly he stole in the dark, or possibly he entered the field or patch of bushland from a direction whence the warning was not visible. In any case he worried more and more, and the more he worried the worse he felt, until finally he was sure the witchcraft was beginning to work against him. Not wanting to die, he went to the blacksmith to confess and to beg to have the curse removed. The tacksmith then demanded a he-goat as a fee, and the skin of a second he-goat, and said he would come to remove the curse in two days' time, and that beer was to be brewed for the occasion.

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The blacksmith then went to the man for whom he had made the witchcraft, and informed him that so-and-so had confessed to the theft and that he was going to release him from the effects of the witchcraft on such-and-such a day, and he (the blacksmith) wish the man to come with him. On the appointed day the blacksmith and this man went to the home of the person who had confessed, and th blacksmith took with him his hammer and tongs, and some broken clay nozzles. Having arrived at the culprit's home, he demanded a small goat, which was slaughtered. Its stomach contents were divided and part were rubbed over the hammer, tongs, and nozzles, to *horia* them (make them cold and peaceful), and part were used to perform a *gũtahĩkia* purification ceremony, which was conducted by the blacksmith himself. Then the big he-goat that was demanded as a fee was produced, and this was also slaughtered. The breast joint was rubbed over with *thenge*, *ũũmũ*, and *rũthuko* magic powders, of which every blacksmith bought a supply from a medicine-man and kept for this purpose. This joint was then eaten by the three men concerned as a sign that the curse had been wiped out. The thief then had to agree to pay compensation to the man from whom he had stolen, and they all ate the meat of the he-goat, drank the beer, and went home.

When the time came for the owner of the crops that had been put under a witchcraft curse to start making use of them himself, he had to get the blacksmith to remove the curse and free the crops, as otherwise he, the owner, and his family, would fall under the spell. He therefore brewed beer, called the blacksmith in to drink it, and fixed a day for removing the spell. The owner provided a he-goat, which was slaughtered, and its stomach and entrails were carried round the field or bush in a clockwise direction. Then part of the stomach contents were rubbed over the hammer, tongs and nozzles that had been used in making the spell, and the rest were scattered through the crops.

In the case of a yam plantation, the blacksmith was given three yam plants as his own to dig yams from as and when he liked. In the case of a sugar-cane field he was given three "stools" of canes to use for making beei for himself. In the case of bushland, he was paid a fee of three goat skins for the protection he had afforded.

The ceremony of removing the witchcraft spell was carried out with as much secrecy as possible, so that people as a whole should not know that the spell had been removed and so should not be tempted to steal.

It sometimes happened that the owner of a protected plot suddenly found that he needed to cut a small quantity of cane, dig a few yams, or cut a few poles for some urgent need, but did not yet wish to have the whole witchcraft spell removed. In that case he could obtain from (p.1229) the blacksmith certain magic powders with which to remove the spell those yams, canes, or poles that he required. For this privilege he paid a special fee of one goat skin.

***Pointing with the Forefinger* (Ũrogi *wa Kĩara*)**

The Kikuyu believed that a witchcraft spell could be effected if a number of people simultaneously pointed at someone with their forefingers. It was quite legitimate to point a forefinger at a person in the ordinary way, but three or more people doing so simultaneously constituted the casting of a witchcraft spell, while this same action performed by a single person to the accompaniment of a threat was also tantamount to casting a witchcraft spell.

Arising out of this belief was the curious practice of never pointing with the forefinger at the sun or moon, which were manifestations of Ngai, the deity. Anyone wishing to point to the sun or moon had to do so with the thumb placed between the first and middle fingers. This was called *kuorota na thano,* and was a sign that warded off evil. If this was not done it might happen that a

number of people in different parts of the country were pointing at the sun or moon with the forefinger at the same moment, and this would be a grave disaster, as it would make the deity think people were trying to cast a spell on him, and he in his anger would punish the land.

Involuntary Witchcraft

The Kikuyu believed strongly that some people suffered from the possession of *gĩthemengũ* (the "evil eye"). It was thought that people who suffered thus could not help casting a spell on anything which they looked upon with favour.

If they saw a healthy child, or a nice looking animal, and they approved of it, the fact that they had seen it with approving eyes caused it to swell in the joints and to grow ill and die. If they not only saw a thing with approving eyes but expressed verbal approval, this made matters still worse, and people who knew that they were afflicted with the evil eye took care never to praise anything.

Some people were born with an evil eye, and suffered from this affliction until they were cured of it. It often happened, too, that a (p.1230) man or woman did not develop an evil eye until late in life, and it was then not so easy to get rid of it, although it was sometimes possible.

A person who suffered from the evil eye and who was not wanton in his attachment to other people's property would never look upon other people's children or cattle without spitting upon them. By so doing he averted the power of the evil eye and proved that he had no wish to destroy someone else's things. Spitting was also a customary form of blessing used by all people, but for those with the evil eye it was a necessary gesture.

If parents discovered that one or other of their children had the evil eye, they took steps quickly to cure them of it. First of all they rendered down fat in a cooking pot and poured off the liquid fat. Then the pot was put back on the fire, and when it was very hot and steaming, the child was made to spit into it. By so doing the power of the evil eye was laid to rest for ever.

Alternatively, a woman who suspected that one of her children had the evil eye prepared a large pot of gruel, and when she had poured this off, she allowed the residue to dry hard on the interior of the cooking pot. When it was dry she called her child to her, and in the child's presence she lit this dried gruel inside the pot. Having once seen this, the evil eye lost all its power for ever.

Just as some people quite unwillingly developed an evil eye and were called *wa gĩthemengũ* (of the evil eye) so others equally unwillingly developed a special ability to annul the effects of evil eye. The mark of such a person was a "black" stain on the tip of his tongue, which looked like a bruise. If a child, sheep, goat, or cow was believed to be sick as a result of an evil eye spell, one of these people was sent for at once to come and perform the ceremony which removed the spell, for if this was not done he would die.

The person arranged to come early in the morning to the homestead of the child or beast suffering from the effects of an evil eye spell, and he had to come without having eaten anything beforehand. Similarly, all people in that homestead had to refrain from eating anything until the ceremony had been performed. As he came, he collected a little earth from the pathway, and put it in a *mũtũndũ* leaf. He also brought with him a stick of *irigi* wood, and a lump of *hondo* (aardvark dung)·

Having arrived at the homestead, he called for a grindstone, and on to this he poured out the little pile of earth that he had brought in the *mũtũndũ* leaf. To this earth he added some scrapings from the lump of dry *hondo,* and some char from the end of his *irigi* stick, which he burnt for the purpose. He then spat into the mixture, after which he summoned every man, woman, and child in the

homestead, and they (p.1231) each contributed a little spittle. With the tang end of an iron axe head he mixed the spittle and the earth into a paste. Then the child or animal suffering from the effects of evil eye was brought out, and he carried the axe head, and the grindstone with the paste mixture, right round the animal or child once counter-clockwise and once clockwise. This done, he dipped the tang end of the axe into the mixture, and anointed the patient's forehead with it, after which he rubbed some on the patient's chest, both shoulders, both wrists, navel, sacrum, back, knees, and ankles. As he did so, he kept repeating the formula, "*Ndatuuhia gĩthemengũ*" (I make blunt the evil eye).

This completed the cure, and the patient, whether human or animal, was well in a few days. There was no special fee for this service, but at some later date the person would be given beer as a thank-offering for his services. The ingredients used in the ceremony were not effective unless administered by a person with such annulling powers, for the virtue was in him and not in the materials he used.

Precautions against the Evil Eye

Some people who knew that they possessed the power of the evil eye were of a wanton disposition, and made use of their power to destroy and damage the children and stock of people they disliked by refusing to take the precaution of spitting before looking at them. There was no way of proving that any particular person was responsible, so no case could be taken to the court. In these circumstances, therefore, if the people of any village or territory became aware that someone unnamed and unknown was casting an evil eye on children and stock, they took precautionary measures.

Whenever an animal died of evil eye, they cut out one of its eyes and buried it in a public pathway. Any person using an evil eye maliciously who stepped over an eye so buried would automatically have his own spells react upon himself and die within a few days.

Many people made a special charm against evil eye for babies and children, because they were particularly susceptible. The charm was made of bits of rough ostrich egg-shell, cowrie shells, and *irigi* wood, threaded alternately on to a leather strap, which was then put on the child as a necklace. No evil eye could possibly affect a child so protected. Alternatively, a necklace made solely of *irigi* wood beads which had been spat upon by a person with annulling powers and rubbed by turn him with aardvark dung was considered just as effective.

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Chapter 28 – Ceremonial Purification

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Introduction

Throughout the preceding chapters there have been innumerable references to purification ceremonies and to ceremonial uncleanness and we must now consider this subject in somewhat greater detail**.** There were several distinct forms of ceremonial uncleanness, some of which were contagious and others not. Each of these different forms could be contracted or acquired in many different ways, and while we cannot possibly consider all of these, it is necessary to discuss a wide

range of examples in order to obtain a reasonably clear idea of what the Kikuyu ideas on this subject were.

The Different Forms of Uncleanness

There were five principal types of ceremonial uncleanness, each of which we must consider separately. Of these, that which was known as *thahu* was probably the commonest, uncleanness due to witchcraft (*ũrogi*) came next, uncleanness caused by dirt (*gĩko*) came third, then uncleanness due to misfortune (*rũruto*), and finally, uncleanness as a result of disease (*mũrimũ*).

Concepts of Uncleanness

Known as Thahu

Attempts have been made by earlier writers to see in *thahu* a direct connection with "taboo", but the similarity between these two words is probably no more than a coincidence. The outward sign of the condition of *thahu* was a wasting away without visible cause, and this condition was seen in both human beings and in livestock. Any person or live animal that had been subjected to conditions which resulted in (p.1233) *thahu* would automatically show some visible signs of the condition unless steps were taken to purify them at the earliest possible opportunity. If a person or animal was afflicted in such a way and reached the stage where it showed the symptoms above described, it had to be purified as soon as possible, or the condition would become more severe and end in death. *Thahu* could be contracted either with or without the knowledge of the person contracting it; it could be contracted through the actions of the person himself or through the acts and agency of some other person, and it was contagious, so that a person who was in the *thahu* condition, whether the *thahu* had become visible or not, could pass that *thahu* on to other people in a variety of ways.

Thahu caused by contact with Death. Any death of a human being resulted in a greater or lesser degree of *thahu* for those who were intimately connected with the deceased. This intimate connection might have been due to ties of blood relationship or to actual contact with the dead person.

Any woman who had a miscarriage or who gave birth to a still-born child acquired *thahu* as a result of contact with the dead foetus, and she had therefore to undergo purification to free herself from this uncleanness. This form of *thahu* was confined to the woman herself, but it was contagious and the contagion could be transferred by a sex act, though not by other ordinary human contacts. Purification, therefore, had to precede all sex acts by this woman.

A woman who bore a child that was healthy and normal but which died before the second birth ceremony took place acquired *thahu* through the death of such a child, but this condition was confined to her and did not affect anyone else, not even her husband. Her condition of *thahu* was contagious and could be transferred to any man who had sexual intercourse with her before she was purified, but unless this happened, purification would not be necessary for anyone but the mother.

The death of any child that had been through the second birth ceremony and who had therefore ceased to be identified solely with his or her mother, and had become a member of the family in his or her own right, caused both the father and the mother to acquire the condition of *thahu*, as well as any children, including grown-up initiated but unmarried girls, who were children of the same mother and who normally occupied the same hut as the deceased.

The death of any unmarried adult, male or female, caused the condition of *thahu* to affect both parents and all the unmarried children (p.1234) of the mother. It would also affect any person or persons who assisted in the disposal of the body of the deceased if they actually touched the corpse, but not otherwise. Any person affected by *thahu* in these conditions could pass the *thahu* on to some other person by means of sexual intercourse if it took place before purification.

The death of a married woman caused her husband and all of her children who were unmarried to acquire *thahu*, but it did not affect her co-wives and their children.

The death of a married man caused his parents, all his wives, and all his children to acquire *thahu* and to require purification, but since he was married, his death would not cause his mother's other children to be in any way affected by the *thahu*.

Any person who killed any other person by violence acquired *thahu* by contact with the death, and, of course, the relatives of the deceased were also affected by the *thahu* in accordance with the above rules.

Thahu that had been caused by contact with death was of a very serious nature, and the exact degree of the seriousness depended upon the extent of the contact. Those who actually touched a dead body contracted the condition of *thahu* in a much more serious form than those whose contact was due only to relationship. In almost all cases in which *thahu* was due to contact with death, a combination of several methods of ceremonial purification was required to remove it.

Thahu caused by contact with Human Blood. Almost any contact with human blood caused a condition of uncleanness, but by no means did all such uncleanness rank as *thahu*, and we shall therefore have to consider uncleanness caused by blood in other sections of this chapter as well as the present one.

If any person drew blood by violence from a *mũndũ wa rũrĩra* (a blood relation), both people acquired *thahu*, and they had both to be purified as soon as possible. This purification had to be carried out in two distinct ways to make it efficacious, first by the ceremony of *kũhoroheria thakame* (make ritual reconciliation for the blood), and then by the ceremony of *gũtahĩkia* (see below for details).

If a husband struck his wife and drew blood, or if a woman should thus draw blood from her husband, both became affected by thahu and had to be purified.

If two people of either sex who had been initiated in the same initiation lodge, and who therefore had the same initiation mother, fought, and one drew blood from the other, they both became affected with a serious form of *thahu* from which they had to be purified immediately if evil consequences were to be avoided.

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Thahu caused by contact with Menstrual Blood. Apart from blood drawn by violence between parties related by marriage or by blood, or by the ties of initiation, *thahu* could be contracted by contact with menstrual blood. If a man slept with his wife and found in the morning that a menstrual flow had started during the night, both he and his wife were thereby affected with *thahu*, and they had to be purified by the slaughter of a ram for an immediate *tahikia* ceremony. Failure to act promptly would cause one or other to die from the *thahu* in a very short time.

If a woman should accidentally become contaminated with the menstrual blood of a co-wife or any other married woman, or of any girl other than a daughter of her own, both parties contracted the condition of *thahu* and had to be purified.

If two unmarried girls belonging to different initiation guilds slept in the same bed, and during the night one of them started a menstrual flow, both became afflicted with a serious form of *thahu*, and they had to be purified forthwith. If, however, two girls who belonged to the same initiation guild had this happen to them, they contracted such a mild form of *thahu* that it was unnecessary for either of them to be purified at that time. When each of them married (in fact when any girl married) she underwent a general purification ceremony, the purpose of which was to free her from such mild forms of *thahu* as this and others that she might have contracted during her maidenhood, and which might develop into something serious and dangerous once she was married.

If a young unmarried man or married man who still belonged to the warrior class slept with a girl in the restricted form of intercourse known as *nguĩko*, and if during the night the girl's menses started and some of her blood contaminated him, but he did not notice this until after he had left the hut in which they had spent the night, he became contaminated with *thahu* and had to be purified. The girl did not become contaminated with *thahu* at all.

If in such circumstances the young man discovered that he had become contaminated with the girl's blood before he left the hut, then the condition of *thahu* could be avoided as follows. The girl had to get up quickly and fetch some fresh cow dung to rub on the parts of the man's body that had been smeared with her blood. Then she had to mix red ochre and water and smear this on the affected parts. By this means he was freed from *thahu* before it had taken hold of him.

If any person should accidentally become contaminated with the menstrual blood of any woman or girl, by sitting on a stool that she had used and which had not been washed, or by lying upon a bed in (p.1236) which she had slept, that person became contaminated with *thahu* and had to be purified.

A midwife did not become contaminated by contact with the blood of her patient unless the patient's blood accidentally got on to some part of her body other than her hands. If this happened, she became contaminated and had to be purified. Otherwise her contact with the blood of the patient made her unclean in only a very mild way that was not *thahu*, and which will be described in another section of this chapter.

Thahu caused by Unnatural Events. People might acquire *thahu* by unnatural events which were absolutely beyond their own control. The following examples will illustrate this aspect of *thahu*.

If a woman gave birth to twins, if she gave birth to a monstrosity, if her baby was born feet first, if the baby fell to the ground at birth, or if any other similar unnatural event occurred in connection with a birth, the woman's husband ran a grave risk of becoming contaminated with *thahu*. The event itself was unclean, and should the woman's husband have sexual intercourse with her before the event was purified (not the woman), then the *thahu* of the event would be automatically transferred to her husband. In order to avoid the *thahu* becoming localised in any one person, therefore, it had to be removed and purified by a sex act performed by the woman concerned and some man other than her husband, and who was not related to him or to the woman in any way. Such a man could not become contaminated by the *thahu* through his act, and the act would automatically destroy the *thahu*.

If a goat or sheep licked the garments of the woman in whose hut it lived, if a goat or sheep tried to enter the bed enclosure of a woman while her husband was there with her, if a goat, ram, or bull-calf came upon a woman kneeling or sitting in her hut and made the action of mounting her, if a man accidentally touched his wife's breasts with his mouth, or she touched his penis with her hands, there was *thahu* in the event that had happened, and that *thahu* was a source of potential danger to both the woman and to her husband, and it would be conveyed to both of them should they have sexual intercourse before the *thahu* had been removed.

Thahu caused by a Breach of Kikuyu Social Law and Customs. Any **person** might become contaminated by the condition of *thahu* if he or she intentionally, or unintentionally, broke any of the laws which regulated Kikuyu social life and behaviour. Thus if a man and his wife, (p.1237) who had both been away from home for one or more nights, returned home separately on the same day, they became affected by *thahu* in a severe form and a purification ceremony had to be hastily arranged if one or other or both was not to suffer. Similarly, if a man attempted to have sexual intercourse with his wife in any way other than that prescribed by law and custom, both acquired *thahu*.

It is impossible to repeat here all the laws and customs that if broken caused a condition of *thahu*, but generally, the breaking of any such law or custom created a condition of potential or actual *thahu*, the seriousness of which was dependent upon the circumstances at the time. Such *thahu* were not all removed by the same form of purification ceremony, nor would a similar *thahu* be removed by an identical purification ceremony on different occasions, for the form of purification was dictated by the circumstances in which the *thahu* had been incurred, or, in some cases, by consultation with a diviner.

Thahu *caused by a Third Party*. Men and women, and also whole families, might become affected with the condition of *thahu* as the result of an act performed by some other person, or even by an animal. Thus if a hyena should dung inside a homestead courtyard, or at the very entrance to the homestead, if a jackal should bark either in the courtyard or near the huts of the homestead, or if a snake should enter a hut and be killed there, a condition of *thahu* was immediately created, and unless it was removed by a purification ceremony which involved the sprinkling of stomach contents, the *thahu* would take hold of one or more members of the homestead.

If a person came into someone else's homestead and broke a cooking pot there, he created a condition of very severe *thahu*, threatening all those in the homestead. If the act was an intentional one, it combined both *thahu* and witchcraft, but if it was accidental, it caused only *thahu*.

Another example of *thahu* which could be created by an outside party occurred if any adult relieved himself or herself within the confines of the homestead courtyard or a hut. This created a condition thahu for all those who lived there, but not for the person responsible.

Thahu as it affected Livestock. It was not only human beings who were affected by the state of ceremonial uncleanness known as *thahu*, for goats, sheep, and cattle could equally become afflicted with this condition, in which case they had to take part in a ceremonial purification ceremony to prevent disaster. A few examples will suffice to show the nature of things which caused stock to acquire *thahu*.

p.1238
In the case of goats and sheep, if the boys who were herding them fought and drew blood from each other, the whole herd became contaminated by *thahu*, and it was necessary to perform the

purification ceremony known as *gũthiũrũra*. If a boy who was herding goats and sheep killed a hare, a francolin, or a zebra rat while in charge of the flocks, then the flocks were immediately contaminated by *thahu*, and had to be purified.

If a goat or sheep was accidentally cut with a sword or knife while out at pasture, the whole flock became contaminated with the condition of *thahu* and had to be purified. In the case of cattle there were an even greater number of things, which could cause *thahu*. If the warrior who was in charge of the herd so far forgot himself as to break the sex laws of the tribe and have restricted sexual intercourse with a girl out in the bush, he caused the whole of the herd to become *thahu* and they would soon start to sicken and die; nothing but his confession followed by a purification ceremony could save them. If, when warriors were bleeding an ox or cow with a bleeding arrow, either the arrow or the bowshaft broke, the whole herd was at once contaminated by *thahu* and a purification ceremony had to take place at once to free them from this uncleanness. Or again, if a gourd milking vessel broke while the cows were being milked, the whole herd was rendered unclean in the *thahu* sense, and had to be purified.

Apart from acts which caused the whole of a herd of cattle or a flock of goats and sheep to become affected by *thahu*, individual animals could also contract the condition of *thahu*. Thus, if a ram should try to mount and serve a female goat, both animals acquired *thahu* and had to be killed. If a goat or sheep attempted to eat the leather carrying skin of a child, or if it should get tangled up in such an object and run off with the straps round its neck, it became affected by *thahu*, and as this *thahu* was not only potentially dangerous to itself, but to all the other animals in the flock, it was killed, and the *thahu* ended with its death. Any individual animal that became subject to *thahu* was, in fact, always killed as a simplified way of eliminating the *thahu* and preventing it from spreading.

Special Precautions against Thahu. From time to time in Kikuyu family life circumstances arose which were associated with potential ceremonial uncleanness of the *thahu* type, and in such circumstances the persons involved might avoid becoming ceremonially unclean by the ceremony of *gwĩkĩrana ngwaro* (to put rawhide strips on one another)·

Thus, if a man and his wife had been away visiting separately and (p.1239) both returned home on the same evening, the situation was potentially one of *thahu*. This uncleanness could be avoided, however, by the slaughter of a small ewe or ram next morning, and the man then put a hide strip of its skin on his wife's left wrist and she put one on his right wrist. Such strips had to be rubbed in the stomach contents of the ewe or ram before being thus used. This very simple ceremony averted the uncleanness.

As another example of a situation charged with potential uncleanness we might mention the following. If a man should have sexual intercourse with his wife in his men's hut, as sometimes happened, he had later on to slaughter a small ram and put a rawhide strip on her, and she put one on him, before he had intercourse with her again in her own hut. Failure to do so would make both of them, and also the woman's children, infected with *thahu*, and this would then necessitate a more complicated purification of the *ndahĩkio* type.

Due to Witchcraft (*Ũrogi*)

Although the most general form of uncleanness was that described by the word *thahu*, the Kikuyu also considered that coming under the influence of any form of witchcraft caused a form of ceremonial uncleanness which was, in a great many cases, contagious, and which could be

removed only by acts ot ceremonial purification, in addition to a ceremony for annulling the witchcraft itself.

Thus a girl who had been put under a spell by the warriors had to undergo a purification ceremony by a medicine-man in addition to the rites and ceremonies which the warriors themselves performed in order to remove the spell.

Similarly, a man against whom witchcraft had been made, had to arrange not only for the annulling of the spell, but also for purification of himself, all his family, and his flocks. It was considered that the spell that had been put on the man was conveyed by him to all his family by contact, and more especially to his wives by acts of sexual contact.

If the form of witchcraft involved was of the type in which an evil charm was used, the act of stepping over it was sufficient to bring about this state of uncleanness. If, on the other hand, the witchcraft was of the type used by members of the *Aĩthaga* clan, it started to take effect as soon as the curse was uttered. In any case, however, the annulling of such a spell had always to be followed by one or other of the methods of ceremonial purification.

p.1240
Of the Gĩko Type

Quite apart from ceremonial uncleanness that was due to witchcraft, and different too from the form of uncleanness known as *thahu* was another type known as *gĩko*, which also required ceremonial acts of purification for its removal. The word *gĩko* means "dirt", and in its ordinary everyday use it referred to material dirt and filth, but it also had an abstract meaning in reference to ceremonial uncleanness which can best be explained by means of examples.

If a man had held an initiation ceremony in his own homestead, to which boys and girls from other homes had come to be initiated, their presence brought uncleanness of the type known as *gĩko*. When, therefore, the whole ceremony was over and the novices had gone to their own homes, a ceremonial purification had to take place in order to cleanse the homestead and all its residents from the defilement. Such defilement was not specific, but vague, and its purification was necessitated as a precautionary measure rather than as against any particular uncleanness. It was held that possibly some of the children who came to be initiated were of the type known as *kĩrema* or *kĩũgũ* (had been born under unnatural conditions or with some unnatural feature, such as a harelip or teeth already cut). Their initiation in someone else's homestead made that homestead unclean in the *gĩko* sense.

To take another example, if a man or woman had been on a trade journey or on other business in Maasai or Kamba country, a purification ceremony had to be performed when he or she returned home in order to remove any *gĩko* with which the traveller might have come into contact. Again the ceremony was in the form of a precautionary measure, rather than an act of purification of some specific defilement. Similarly, if a person who belonged to the Ũkabi initiation guild went through the ceremony which changed him or her into a member of the Kikuyu initiation guild, or vice versa, the ceremony of *kũgarũra* (to change) had to be accompanied by a ceremony of purification. This was in order to remove the *gĩko* or taint of the other guild, whose whole life and ceremonies were different. To take yet another example, if a Kikuyu elder was on a visit to some other elder to whom he was not related, and if he was resident in that other man's homestead during the performance of any act of sacrifice, whether it was a blood sacrifice or a ceremonial sex act, then on return to his own home that man had to be ceremonially purified because he had been in

contact with the family sacrifices of another person. He had acquired the *gĩko* of that (p.1241) other family, and he had to have it removed before he resumed normal life in his own home.

All forms of ceremonial *gĩko* were contagious and could be transferred to other members of the family to which the affected person belonged, but not to strangers. In particular the *gĩko* was transferred by sex acts. Thus a man who came back from a sojourn in Maasai country, and who had sexual intercourse with any one of his wives before he had been through a ceremony of purification, would infect not only that wife, but the whole of his family with the uncleanness, and in such a case they would then all have to be purified, including his stock and the huts themselves.

Of the Rũruto Type

Yet another type of ceremonial uncleanness which was different from those described above, and which necessitated ritual purification was the uncleanness known as *rũruto* (misfortune), and it was principally connected with the building of a hut or a homestead.

If a man had moved his homestead from one place to another, and in the course of its construction on the new site any person who was working in the buildings was cut or scratched by a piece of building material and bled, then that homestead became affected by *rũruto*, which could be removed only by special purification ceremonies of the *ndahĩkio* type.

Or again, if a new homestead was erected, and before it had had a house-warming ceremony held for it (*rugũria*), any of the women who belonged to that homestead had a menstrual period, the homestead became infected with *rũruto* and all its residents had to be purified.

To take yet another example, if, when a new homestead was built and before the ceremony of *kũrugũria mũciĩ* had taken place, any member of the family that lived in it ate meat of any animal that had died a natural death, or had been slaughtered elsewhere, or if any of them drank honey beer, the whole family became subject to *rũruto*.

Due to Mũrimũ (*Disease*)

Under certain conditions, and especially in connection with such diseases as smallpox, it was held that the disease left an uncleanness in the patient which lingered on after recovery from the outward signs of the disease, and which had therefore to be removed by a ceremonial act of ritual purification.

p.1242

All people who recovered from smallpox were treated thus, and to a lesser extent people who had been ill for a long time from other diseases of the *mũrimũ* type. This did not, however, apply to children who got chickenpox, mumps, or measles, although in rare cases, if a whole family of children became ill simultaneously with such a disease, their mother had to be purified on their behalf. In such cases as those quoted above, the uncleanness from which the person had to be purified was of the *mũrimũ* type, and the ceremony was called *gũtahĩkia mũrimũ* (the ceremonial cleansing of the disease).

It must, however, be remembered that any of the other forms of uncleanness might also result in illness, so that there were also many cases where a person who had been ill had to undergo a purification ceremony which was not of the form of *gũtahĩkia mũrimũ*, but a ceremony to remove one of the other forms of uncleanness which was held to be the cause of the illness. Thus a person who had been seriously ill and who had been treated by a medicine-man had to be purified when at length normal health was recovered, and this ceremony included ceremonially shaving the head, together with a ceremony of *gũtahĩkia*.

Methods of Performimg Ceremonial Purification

Just as the forms of ceremonial uncleanness that were recognised were numerous, so too were the methods of removing uncleanness. In serious cases of *thahu*, and also in some other forms of ceremonial uncleanness, the process of purification involved the use of not one, but several purification rites, but in the case of minor defilement, one simple purification was usually considered adequate.

The commonest form of ceremonial purification was by means of the ceremony known as *gũtahĩkia*. This word means literally, "to cause to vomit", and the noun from this root which describes the ceremony itself is *ndahĩkio*. The ceremony of *gũtahĩkia* varied considerably according to the nature of the uncleanness which was to be purified and removed, and it is not possible to give any single account which will accurately describe the procedure.

All *ndahĩkio* ceremonies, however, had one thing in common, that is, the symbolic "vomiting" of the evil and uncleanness by placing some object repeatedly to the lips of the patient. A number of distinct *ndahĩkio* ceremonies have been described in detail in various preceding chapters, but in order to give a more complete picture of their variability a detailed description will be given here of nine such ceremonies (p.1243) as performed by a medicine-man. In all important ceremonies of purification by means of *ndahĩkio* a member of this profession officiated, but on the other hand, council elders of the third and fourth grades were considered to be competent and qualified to carry out minor *ndahĩkio* ceremonies which did not involve the use of magic powders.

Furthermore, very simple and modified forms of the *ndahĩkio* ceremony could be undertaken by almost any adult male—as in the case of the purification of a girl upon whom the warriors had placed a spell—but such modified and symbolic purifications were usually followed by a further purification by a medicine-man.

The Ceremonies of Ndahĩkio to remove Thahu

The Ndahĩkio Ceremony to remove Thahu caused by contact with Death

When any male touched a dead body, either in connection with burial, or with the disposal of the body by carrying it out to the burial ground, the following form of *ndahĩkio* ceremony had to be performed as a ritual purification. Usually the disposal of a body by burial or otherwise, necessitated the help of several people to carry it, so we will take as an example a ceremony for four individuals. These individuals had a preliminary purification by head shaving and washing on the day on which they disposed of the body, after which there had to be one full day's interval between that and the *ndahĩkio* ceremony.

A virgin ewe, a virgin she-goat, or else a young ram that was not yet mature (but never a young male goat), was taken out into the bush by the medicine-man who was going to perform the ceremony, accompanied by those who were to be purified and two or three council elders. An open place was chosen (it was not in this instance at the foot of a *mũkenia* or *mũthakwa* bush), and here

the animal was killed by the elders and skinned and cut up. They removed from it the right forefoot with the skin on, the second chamber of the stomach, the dorsal sac of the rumen and the stomach contents (*taatha*) it contained, and the third chamber of the stomach. The medicine-man took these things, and he and those who were to be purified made their way to the nearest stream, leaving the elders to roast the meat of the slaughtered beast. On the way, the medicine-man collected at least one leafy stem from each of nine of the following plants: *mũcatha*, *ũrutĩ*, *coco*, *mahoroha*, *mũraria*, *mũtei*, *mũkengeria*, *mũcingiri*, *inagu*, *mũthakwa*, and *mũkeũ*. He also collected roots of the creepers called *mũriĩra* and *kanyanja*. Having (p.1244) arrived at the stream, he dug a small shallow basin in the soil about 10ft from the bank, digging with the pointed end of his Thomson's gazelle horn charm. He lined the basin with banana leaves and filled it with water drawn from the stream in a banana leaf.

This done, he emptied into the water the stomach contents from the second chamber of the stomach, and handed the stomach itself to those who were to be purified. They were told to cut it into strips, make a hole in each strip, and slip one on to their right wrist.

Meanwhile, the medicine-man took from his bag the little gourd bottles containing the magic powders *ũũmũ*, *ng'ondu*, *rũthuko*, *mũcanjamũka* and *kĩnoria*, and he put a little of each of these powders into the water and stomach contents in the basin, and stirred the mixture well. This done, he made those who were to be purified sit down in a half circle round this "basin" in order of seniority, with the eldest on the right-hand side. They had to sit with their backs turned in the direction of the homestead where they had touched the corpse, that is, they had to *hutatĩra mũciĩ*. The medicine-man then took the foot and the third chamber of the stomach of the animal that was slaughtered, and holding the former in his right hand and the latter in his left, he *thiũrũra*-d the patients with these objects, that is to say, he passed them round them once clockwise, and then once counter-clockwise.

They were thus all brought within the magic circle and were ready to be purified with these objects. He dipped both the foot and the third chamber of the stomach into the mixture in the basin, and put them both to the lips of the senior person among those who were to be purified, saying as he did so, "*Ndagũtahĩkia gĩkuũ*" (I cause you to throw up the death). "*Ndagũtahĩkia thahu ũcio wĩ nagwo*" (I cause you to throw up the *thahu* that is upon you).

This done, he dipped the two objects into the mixture again and repeated the process with the next senior, and so on until each of those present for purification had been similarly treated. He then threw the foot and the third chamber of the stomach over his shoulder into the bush saying, "*Nĩndate thahu wa gĩkuũ*" (I throw away the uncleanness of death). This done, he ordered all those who were being cleansed to sit on the other side of the basin in the same order, but facing the homestead where they had touched the corpse. While they were changing their positions he tied his leafy twigs into two bundles, one with an even number of twigs and the other with an odd number, using the *mũriĩra* roots to tie the former and the *kanyanja* roots to tie the latter.

Having made up these two bundles, he proceeded to *thiũrũra* them with these so as to bring them again within the circle of the influence (p.1245) of his magic. Holding the two bundles, one in each hand with the stems pointing away from him, he dipped the stems into the mixture in the basin and held the bundle in his right hand to the lips of the man on the left of the four sitting round, and that in his left hand to the lips of the man on the right, that is, the senior person present, saying as he did so, "*Ndamũtahĩkia gĩkuũ*" (I cause you (plural) to throw up death). Then, changing the bundles over to the opposite hand, he repeated the process saying as he did so, "*Ndamũtahĩkia thahu*" (I

cause you (plural) to throw up uncleanness). Then he changed the bundles over again and similarly treated the two persons sitting in the middle. Finally, he turned the bundles round so that the leafy ends pointed away from him, and he dipped these in the mixture and again put them to the lips of the two on the outside, and then to the two in the middle, repeating the same formula.

This done, he laid down the leafy bundle containing the odd number of twigs, and with the other in his left hand, he put it to the lips of the senior person—after dipping it in the mixture—while with his own right hand he took hold of the stomach skin on the patient's right wrist. He repeated both formulae and as he did so he drew off the strip of skin from the man's wrist. As it came off he said, "*Nĩndakũruta thahu wa gĩkuũ*" (I take from you the uncleanness of death). Then he tore the skin into two, and having done so he threw it away saying, "*Nĩndate thahu ũrĩa wothe ũgũkũgĩĩte*" (I throw away all forms of *thahu* that have infected you). He repeated the whole process with each of the others in turn, after which he ordered them all to wash themselves all over with the mixture in the basin, and wipe themselves with *mũkeũ* leaves.

When they had done this they were made to stand up by the side of the basin in a row facing the homestead from whence they had come, and the medicine-man dipped his two bundles of twigs into what was left of the mixture in the basin, and then with the leafy ends he wiped each man's back from head to heel twice. As he did so he said, "*Ndakũinamĩria ũũru na thahu wa gĩkuũ ũrĩa ũkũmũgwete*" (I cause the evil and the uncleanness of death which have taken hold of you to go down). Then, still standing at their backs, he wiped each of them from their heels upwards to their heads with the leaves which had been dipped again in the mixture, and as he did so he said, "*Ndamũtiirĩra mũnyaka*. *Gĩkuũ nĩndamũninĩra*" (I raise up good luck for you (plural). I have made an end of death for you).

This done, he came round and stood in front of the people and repeated the whole process of wiping them downwards twice and upwards twice. He then ordered all of them to step across the basin of (p.1246) water and leave the invisible magic circle. Then he made each of them lick some *ira* powder off his thumb, after which he rubbed *ira* powder from his right thumb on to the bridges of their noses, Adam's apples, chests, navels, the palms of their hands, and the soles of their feet. Next he took his bottles of magic powders and emptied a little of each of the same five that he had used in the purification ceremony into the palm of his right hand, mixed them, tasted the mixture himself, and gave each of those who had been purified a little to swallow.

They were then purified, and all that remained was for the medicine-man to untie his bundles of twigs and scatter them, empty the "basin" by pushing a pole through the banana leaves, and then, when the mixture had drained away, throw away the banana leaves and fill up the hole. When all this had been done, he returned to eat the meat that had been roasted by the elders, but the people he had cleansed went straight home, for they might not eat the meat of the animal used for their purification. They were then purified from having touched a corpse, but there remained other purification ceremonies to remove the influence of death, that is, the *hukũra* ceremonies already described in Chapter 22, in which they participated with the rest of the family of the deceased.

The Ndahĩkio Ceremony to remove Thahu caused by contact with Human Blood

In many cases the condition of *thahu* was incurred as a result of one person drawing blood by a blow or a cut from a person who was related, or who was in some intimate way associated with himself or herself. In such cases both people became unclean and a purification ceremony was necessary. The details of the ceremony varied in minor points according to each particular case, but the essentials were the same, and we will therefore describe the ceremony as performed when

two men who had been initiated in the same initiation lodge were involved, one having drawn blood from the other.

The man who had drawn blood from the other had to obtain a small immature goat or sheep, and in this case even an immature male goat might be used. They then arranged with a medicine-man and some elders of senior council status to conduct the ceremony.

The animal was taken out into the bush and slaughtered by the elders. When they pierced it to draw off its blood they caught some of this in a *mũthakwa* leaf and laid it aside. Then when they cut the animal open they removed the dorsal sac of the rumen. This the elders cut up (p.1247) at once into 14 strips, each of which they pierced with a small hole. From the place where it had been severed from the animal they removed a little of the stomach contents and put these also in a *mũthakwa* leaf.

Next the elders cut a piece of *mũthakwa* wood to represent the weapon with which the blood had been drawn from the injured person, and on to the end of this they smeared some of the blood that was in the *mũthakwa* leaf. The man who had drawn blood from the other was then given this bit of wood and told to pretend to strike the other. As he did so, the senior elders jumped in and said, "*Hĩ! Hĩ! Nĩ atĩa ũũ, ũngĩtihia wakinĩguo*" (Hey there, you might draw blood from your fellow initiate). As they said this, they took the symbolic weapon from him.

The medicine-man who was present was then called, and the person from whom blood had originally been drawn held the medicine-man's arm while the latter used stomach contents to rub off the sheep's blood that was on the end of the stick, saying, "*Ndahoria thakame*" (I make cold the blood). This symbolic weapon was then rubbed over with fat and thrown far away. Next, each of the two men had 7 of the 14 strips that had been cut from the stomach of the animal put on his fingers and toes, with at least one on each hand and each foot. This done, the elders took the rest of the blood that was in the *mũthakwa* leaf and anointed each of the two on the forehead, on the top of each shoulder, on the navel, on the palms of the hands held together, and on each ankle. Thus each of the two was rubbed seven times with blood.

Then the senior elder, the medicine-man, and the person who had wounded the other, stood in front of the person who had been wounded, and the medicine-man held the leaf containing the stomach contents, while the person who had wounded the other held the senior elder's right arm at the elbow so as to be associated with him in what was then to be done. One elder took a little of the stomach contents from the medicine-man on the finger and thumb of his right hand, and rubbed it the blood on the forehead of the person who had been wounded, and then made a jerking movement away, saying as he did so "*Ndakũũra thakame*" (I pull away the blood). He repeated this action on each of the other six places at which the blood had been rubbed on to the person being purified.

Then the person who had been wounded and the person who had wounded him changed places, and the former held the right elbow of the senior elder while he wiped away the seven spots of blood on the other man in the same way and with the same formula. This done, (p.1248) each of the two men was given some raw fat, and this they rubbed on the seven places where the blood had been wiped off. Next, the elders prepared to roast the meat of the animal that had been slaughtered, while the medicine-man took the two men down to the nearest stream for the next part of the purification.

At the stream the medicine-man proceeded to perform the ceremony of *gũtahĩkia* exactly as described in the account of how the *thahu* of death was removed, except in the following details.

After putting the leg of the animal and the third chamber of the stomach to the lips of both parties, and causing them to "throw up the evil of blood", and after he had also performed this act with the stem ends of his bunches of leaves, the medicine-man laid down one bunch of leaves and made the person who had been wounded hold his right arm while he proceeded to draw off six of the seven strips that were on the fingers and toes of the man who had done the wounding. As he drew off each one, he at the same time, put the twig ends of the bunch which was in his left hand to the lips of the man and said, "*Twagũcomora thakame ya wakinĩguo*" (We draw off from you the blood of your fellow initiate). Then he instructed the man to remove the last of the seven strips himself. Next he made this man hold his right arm while together they similarly drew off six of the strips from the man who had been wounded, who then took off the last himself.

The seven strips having thus been removed from each person, the medicine-man proceeded to put the leafy ends of his two bunches of twigs to their lips, after dipping them afresh in the mixture in the basin. Next they both washed ceremonially in the contents of the basin, after which he again told them to stand up facing their homes and he proceeded to wipe them from head to heel and heel to head, face to toes and toes to face, as in all *tahĩkia* ceremonies.

The rest of the ceremony of anointing them with *ira* powder and giving them magic powders to swallow was, in every respect, the same as we have already described in connection with *ndahĩkio* for uncleanness caused by contact with death.

The Ndahĩkio Ceremony to remove Thahu caused by contact with Menstrual Blood

Thahu caused by menstrual blood could be incurred, as we have seen, by both men and women, and in many different circumstances. The details of the purification depended upon those circumstances. An account of one such ceremony will, however, serve to show in what (p.1249) general ways this type of purification differed from others. As our example we will take the case of an unmarried girl who had come into contact with the blood of some other girl, and who for one reason or another had kept silent and not been purified immediately.

Thahu of this type did not usually start to afflict the girl until after she was married and had a home of her own. Then she began to pine and to grow thin and unhealthy, and when questioned by her mother or mother-in-law as to the possible reasons for her ill health, her conscience bothered her, and she knew that the cause of the trouble was probably the *thahu* which she had incurred as a maiden, and which she had failed to tell her parents about, and thus had not been purified from at the time.

Her husband and parents then arranged for a ceremony to purify her from the *thahu* of another girl's menstrual blood. A virgin ewe or a young ram that was immature and had never served a ewe was obtained, and a medicine-man was called in to purify her. No attempt was made to get hold of the other girl whose blood had defiled her, because a long time had elapsed and she had probably been married in the meantime and need not now be involved. If she also suffered from the *thahu*, she would be purified as and when necessary. The medicine-man who had been called in to perform the purification brought with him, in addition to his bag of magic powders, some roots of the plant called *gakarakũ*. This was the plant from which the Kikuyu mixed a deep red dye, the colour of menstrual blood, and not the lighter red of sheep's blood.

Having arrived at the homestead where the girl lived, he crushed the *gakarakũ* root with a little water to make some dye. A part of this he laid aside temporarily, and the rest he mixed with *ũũmũ* powder and a little castor oil. This mixture he rubbed on to the face and forehead of the animal

that was to be slaughtered for the purification ceremony. Then he took a knife and cut the ewe on the nose so that it bled a little. This done, he led the ewe once round the girl clockwise, after which she was instructed to rub her forehead against the nose and forehead of the ewe. The ewe was then led round her counter-clockwise, and again she rubbed her forehead on its nose and forehead. This same procedure was repeated four times.

Next the medicine-man asked for a *kĩongoro* (the bud end of a banana bunch) of the *mũtahato* species, which he had previously sent an elder to fetch, and from this bud he peeled two bracts. He then cut off one of the ears of the ewe with a single blow and caught the blood which dripped from the wound in these two bracts, which he then placed carefully under the eaves of the woman's own hut, together with the (p.1250) banana bud. To the blood in one of these bracts he added the rest of the dye which he had laid aside when he first mixed it.

He then told the girl who was to be purified to bring two banana leaves and two *mbũthũ* bottle gourds, and he instructed her to go to the river and fill these with water in a special way. The water in one of these gourds was called *maĩ mainiĩ* (upside down, or reversed water), and it had to be drawn first as follows. The girl dipped the gourd into the running water, and with a movement across the current and away from her home she drew the first part, then she had to draw a little with the mouth of the gourd facing upstream, then a little more with the mouth of the gourd across the current and facing towards her home, and finally, she filled it with water drawn with the mouth of the gourd facing downstream. To this gourd of water she added a little mud taken from the bed of the stream and a little earth from a place where two paths met, after which she corked it with *mũtei* leaves to mark it as *maĩ mainiĩ*. The other gourd was filled with water by holding the mouth of the gourd upstream so that the flow of water came straight into it. The gourd had to then be corked with *mũkenia* leaves and it was known as *maĩ ma ndiiro* (water for propping up).

While the girl was away on these errands, the medicine-man and one or two council elders took the ewe out beyond the entrance to the homestead and slaughtered it. When it had been skinned the medicine-man took from it the parts that he needed for the ceremony of purification, namely, the right forefoot, the third chamber of the stomach, the second chamber of the stomach, the intestines, and the dorsal sac of the rumen. The last named, he cut into two strips as *ngwaro*, each of which he slit in the middle.

Having taken these things, he collected the plants which he needed for the ceremony of *ndahĩkio*, and which were chosen from among those listed in connection with removing *thahu* due to touching a dead body. He made his nine twigs into bundles and tied them with *mũriĩra* roots straight away. When the girl had come back from the stream she went to her hut and waited there until the medicine-man was ready.

He came with the various parts of the sheep listed above and his bundles of leaves, which he laid down by the entrance to her hut, together with his bag of magic powders. He took up the banana bud from under the eaves, rubbed some of the blood from the ewe's ear mixed with red dye on it, and went into the hut and placed this on the girl's bed. He then dipped four *mũthakwa* leaves in this same mixture of blood and dye, took these into the hut, put one on the bed, one at the entrance to the bed, one on the floor of the hut, and one at the door of the hut. The banana bud bracts containing the pure blood (p.1251) and the blood mixed with dye were also taken in and placed on the girl's bed.

Next, the medicine-man took into the hut some of the stomach contents from the second chamber of the animal's stomach. He put a little on each of the four bloody leaves in turn, and, carrying

them in his left hand, walked solemnly out of the homestead and threw them away. He next went back into the hut, picked up the banana bud and the two banana bracts, and put these back again under the eaves of the hut.

Then the medicine-man told the girl to bring out her own stool and sit on it in front of her hut. He put the two strips cut from the stomach of the animal on her left leg and left wrist. This done, he anointed the girl with the blood from the ewe's ear in nine places, as follows: on her forehead, both shoulders, her navel, her cupped palms, both knees, and on the lower part of her calves. When he was thus anointing her with blood his arm had to be held either by an old woman past childbearing or else by a young girl who had been through the second birth ceremony, but who was as yet far too young to have had her first menses. This old woman or girl symbolized the girl who had caused the uncleanness by letting some of her menstrual blood get on to the patient. The part had to be played by a person too old or too young to have menses, because otherwise the act of taking part in this purification ceremony might contaminate them and cause them to acquire *thahu*. With his arm still being held by the old woman or young girl, the medicine-man rubbed stomach contents into each of the places where he had put blood, saying, "*Ndakũũra thakame ĩrĩa wahakirũo*" (I draw away the blood that was smeared on to you). Next the medicine-man wound the intestines of the sheep round the girl as she sat on her stool facing the entrance to the homestead, and as he did so, he said, "*Ndakũrigicĩria ũndũ wa thakame ĩrĩa yaku na mwĩrigici mũirĩtu ũngĩ*" (I encircle you and tangle you up with the matter of the blood of yourself and that girl).

The medicine-man then dug a small hole in front of the girl, lined it with banana leaves, and poured into it the *maĩ mainiĩ* (the first gourd of water she had fetched). To this water he added the stomach contents of the slaughtered animal which he had brought in the second chamber of the stomach, together with the five magic powders: *ũũmũ*, *mũcanjamũka*, *kĩnoria*, *ng'ondu*, and *rũthuko*. Then, his right arm still held by the woman past childbearing or the young girl, he proceeded to *tahĩkia* the girl for whom he was performing the ceremony by putting the animal's foot and the third chamber of the stomach into the mixture and then to her lips, and at the same time saying, "*Ndagũtahĩkia* (p.1252) *thakame; ndagũtahĩkia thahu*" (I cleanse you from the blood; I cleanse you from ceremonial uncleanness).

When he had thrown away the foot and the third chamber of the stomach, the old woman or girl who had held his arm was told to let go, and he proceeded to *tahĩkia* the girl with the stem ends of the bundles of twigs. This done, he made the girl turn round and face her own hut, and he put the water from the other gourd (*maĩ ma ndiiro*) into the basin with more magic powders of the same kind, and proceeded to *tahĩkia* her with the leafy ends of the two bunches of twigs, after which he made her remove for herself the rawhide strip from her left wrist. Next he unwound the intestines that encircled the girl, saying, "*Ndarigicũria thahu ũrĩa ũgũkũrigicĩte*" (I untangle and unwind you from the uncleanness that had entangled you).

Then, with the girl still sitting facing her hut, he passed these intestines between her legs from the front backwards and dragged them out of the homestead and threw them into the bush. As he did so he said, "*Ndaumagaria thahu wa thakame*" (I escort away the uncleanness of blood).

Next he returned to the girl and proceeded with the ceremony by wiping her from head to heel, from heel to head, from face to toes, and from toes to face as already described in the section on death purification. After this, he anointed her with *ira* powder and gave her some of each of the five magic powders to eat. Then he gave her a piece of ram's fat to anoint herself with, and while she did so he went out into the bush to throw away the two banana bracts that had had blood and

blood and dye in them, together with the banana leaves that formed the basin, and the twigs that formed the bunches used in the *ndahĩkio* ceremony.

He came back to the courtyard, picked up the banana bud that had been smeared with blood and dye earlier, and rubbed a little castor oil on it. He then solemnly addressed the girl, saying, "*Ndacokia thakame na maambura maku gwaku*" (I return your own blood and menses to your place). Then he put the bud on her bed. This last act was of the greatest importance, because the whole ceremony had been concerned with the magic removal of menstrual blood and there was always the fear that the menses of the patient might be affected. By thus ceremonially placing the banana bud that had been used in the ceremony, and which had a part of the blood and dye still on it, back on the girl's bed, the medicine-man publicly assured her that the ceremony he had performed had not in the least affected her own menses, but had merely removed the defilement of the blood of the other girl.

p.1253

The Ndahĩkio Ceremony to remove Thahu caused by Unnatural Events

As we have seen, there were many different types of unnatural events that could cause *thahu*, and some of them required a ceremony of purification by a sex act performed by the woman concerned *and* a other than her husband. Others, however, required a special *form* of *ndahĩkio*, and in particular this was true of any *thahu* due to some unnatural act between husband and wife during intercourse. In each case the details of the ceremony differed slightly, but in all *such* cases the main features of the *ndahĩkio* were the same.

As an example of this type of *ndahĩkio*, we will take the case in which a *woman* accidentally touched her husband's penis with her hands. If this happened, the husband next morning sent for a medicine-man to purify them at once, for this type of *thahu* was very serious, and *undue* delay would result in the speedy death of either the husband or the wife.

The medicine-man arrived with his bag of magic powders, and having been told what had happened, demanded a young ram to be slaughtered for the purification ceremony. The ram having been produced, the medicine-man asked for some castor oil, which had to come from the wife's personal oil bottle, and with a little of this he mixed to a paste the magic powders *ũũmũ*, *ng'ondu*, and *kĩnoria*. This paste he rubbed on the nose and forehead of the ram, and a portion of it was put in the ram's mouth and he was made to swallow it. This done, the medicine-man instructed the husband to sit down outside the hut where the *thahu* had been incurred, with his wife on his left and all her children who were sleeping in the children's sleeping place of that hut on her left, in order of their seniority, save that any children who had not been through the second birth ceremony, which separated them from their mother, had to be actually by her side.

The medicine-man then led the ram round the little group once clockwise and brought the ram face to face with the man, who laid his hands on the cheeks of the ram to hold its head steady, and then rubbed his own forehead on its nose and forehead, thus transferring some of the magic paste from the animal's head to his own, and at the same time intimately associating himself with the animal that was to be slaughtered. He then led the ram round the little group again counter-clockwise and brought the animal face to face with the woman, who did as her husband had done. This performance was repeated until the man and the woman had each rubbed foreheads with the ram four times, and the party had been encircled eight times in all, four (p.1254) times clockwise and four times counter-clockwise. This done, the woman was sent to the river to fetch water in two *mbũthũ* bottle gourds. This she had to do in the way described in connection with water fetched

by a young married woman to remove the *thahu* of menstrual blood. She was also told to bring back four banana leaves. If she could find the plant called *njogu ya iria* she was to cork one of the gourd bottles with the leaves of this plant instead of with *mũtei* or *mũkenia*, but it did not matter which gourd of water she corked with this plant.

While the woman was away, the medicine-man and the husband took the ram out into the bush beyond the entrance to the homestead and, with the help of two or three .other elders called in for the purpose they slaughtered, skinned, and cut it up. From this animal the medicine-man took the parts that he required for the purification ceremony· the skin from the penis of the ram, a strip of skin from the right foreleg, the right forefoot, the second chamber of the stomach with the stomach contents in it, some stomach contents from the main stomach, the third chamber of the stomach, and the intestines.

The medicine-man then went into the bush to cut six lengths of *mũcatha* wood and collect nine of the plants normally used to make the bundles of twigs for a *ndahĩkio* ceremony. When he had all these things, he and the husband went back to the homestead leaving the other men to roast the meat. By this time the woman had returned from the river with the water and banana leaves, and all the preliminary preparations were complete.

The medicine-man dug a shallow hole in the ground at the entrance to the woman's hut, lined it with two of the banana leaves, and put the stomach contents from the second chamber of the stomach into it, some of the water from the gourd of *maĩ mainiĩ*, and some of the following five magic powders: *ũũmũ*, *ng'ondu*, *rũthuko*, *kĩnoria*, and *mũcanjamũka*. Having done this, he put the skin of the ram's penis on the second toe of the husband's right foot, and the skin strip from the animal's foreleg on to the hand with which the woman had touched her husband's penis.

Then the medicine-man ordered husband and wife and all the children to go into the hut and close the door behind them. The children who had been through the second birth ceremony went and sat on their own bed in the children's bedroom. The husband and wife and any children who had not yet been through the second birth ceremony had to go to the woman's bed where the accident that had caused the *thahu* had taken place. The husband and wife sat on the bed facing the outer wall of the hut with their arms round each other's waists, and the children who had not been born again sat behind (p.1255) them on the bed. The husband was told that when they were in position he was to use a thick *mũro*, *or* woman's digging stick, to thrust through the wall of the hut and make a hole. The medicine-man went round behind the hut, taking with him his bag of magic powders, three of the *mũcatha* sticks, two banana leaves, the stomach contents of the ram which were wrapped in a *mũthakwa* leaf, and the rest of the *maĩ mainiĩ* water. When the husband thrust the stick through the wall and made a hole, the medicine-man dug a shallow basin-like hole in the soil just below the hole, lined it with banana leaves, poured in the water, added the stomach contents, and then some of the same five magic powders that he had put in the basin in front of the hut.

Having stirred the mixture well, he tore off two little bits of banana leaf and passed these through the hole in the wall to the husband and wife to use as spittoons. Then he dipped one of his *mũcatha* sticks into the mixture in the basin, passed the end of it through the hole in the wall, and told the husband to put his lips to it and then spit into his banana leaf spittoon. Husband and wife were sitting all the time with arms round each other's waists and the medicine-man said to the man, "*Mũkaguo nĩwe ũragũtahĩkia thahu rĩu*" (It is your wife who is causing you now to vomit up the *thahu*). Having done this, he withdrew the stick and threw it away. Then he dipped a second stick into the mixture, passed it through the hole in the wall, and told the woman to put it to her lips and

then spit into her spittoon leaf. As he did so, he said to her, "It is your husband who is now making you vomit the uncleanness". This stick he also threw away. Then he dipped the third stick into the mixture, put it through the hole in the wall, made the husband touch it with his lips and spit, withdrew it, put it again in the mixture, pushed it through the hole for the wife to put to her lips and then spit, and so on until each of the two had touched the stick with their lips and spat four times. All the time he repeated, "*Ndamũtahĩkia thahu*" (I cause you both to vomit the *thahu*). The medicine-man then threw this third stick away, the banana leaves forming the basin, and all its contents. He told the husband and wife to leave their bed and go and sit together behind the closed door of the hut.

The medicine-man went round and back into the courtyard, and here he slightly raised the door so as to make a gap under it. He then took the other three *mũcatha* sticks and, dipping the first of them into mixture in the basin in front of the doorway, he passed it through under the door to the man, telling him to put it to his lips and spit. This stick was then handed back to the medicine-man, who threw it away. He repeated the process with the second stick, passing it to the wife this time. The third stick he passed alternatively to husband and (p.1256) wife eight times, dipping it into the mixture at each interval. He then threw the third stick away.

Next the medicine-man told the husband to push his right leg through the gap under the doorway, and the medicine-man then pulled the bit of skin from the ram's penis off the man's toe, and as he did so, he said, "*Rĩu ũyũ nĩguo ũruu ũrĩa ũkũhutĩtio nĩ mũkaguo*. *Nĩndakũruta thahu ũcio*" (Now this is the penis which your wife touched. I take away that uncleanness). Having said this, he tore this bit of skin into two, walked out of the homestead, and threw it away. He then came back and told the wife to push the hand that had touched her husband's penis through the gap under the door, and he took from it the strip of skin from the foreleg of the ram, saying, "*Rĩu ũyũ nĩguo guoko kũrĩa kũhutirie mũthuuriguo ũruu*. *Nĩndakũruta thahu ũcio*" (Now this is the hand that touched your husband's penis, I take away that uncleanness). He then tore that strip of skin into two, took it out of the homestead and threw it away. At the same time he threw away the two leaf spittoons. He next returned and told the man and his wife to come out with all the children who were in the hut. He made them sit down with their backs to the hut, facing the entrance to the courtyard. He then tied one end of the intestines of the ram to the man's right ankle, passed the intestines all round the group encircling them, and tied the other end of the intestines to the wife's right ankle. He then proceeded to a normal *ndahĩkio* ceremony, using first the ram's forefoot and third chamber of the stomach, and then the stem ends of the bunches of twigs. After this he added water from the other gourd (the *maĩ ma ndiiro*) to the basin, and some more of each of the magic powders. Next he made the group all turn round and face the door of the hut, and with them sitting thus he continued the *ndahĩkio* using the leafy ends of his two bunches of twigs.

When he had done this, he untied the intestines from the leg of the woman, unwound them, and untied the other end from the man's leg; as he did all this he said, "*Nĩndamũrigicũria thahu ũrĩa ũkũmũrigicĩte* (I untangle the uncleanness that has entangled you).

This done, he made the man stand up with his legs apart facing the door of the hut. His wife stood likewise behind him and all the children behind the wife in order of their seniority. Then the medicine-man passed the intestines between the man's legs from front to back, and so along the "tunnel" formed by all their legs. Having done so, he seized the end that was out beyond the back of the farthest child and drew them through between all their legs, and then along the ground and out of the homestead into the bush beyond. As he did so, he said, "*Ndaumagaria thahu wothe*" (I escort away all the uncleanness). He (p.1257) then came back and made the man and his wife and

all the children wash in the mixture in the basin, after which he brushed each of them four times from head to heel and four times from heel to head. Then he came round to the front and brushed each of them four times from face to toes and four times from toes to face. Next, he anointed the husband and wife each with *ira* powder as for similar ceremonies, and gaVe each of them and each of the children a little of the mixture of magic powders used in the *ndahĩkio* to swallow. This completed the ceremony.

The Ndahĩkio Ceremony to remove Thahu caused by a Breach of Social Law and Custom

The forms of *ndahĩkio* for breaches of social law and custom were varied, and although all breaches of social law and custom caused *thahu*, these types of *thahu* did not always require the *ndahĩkio* form of purification but might instead be removed in other ways. For the moment, we will consider the specific form of *ndahĩkio* used for the removal of *thahu* due to a deliberate breach of the sex laws on the part of a man and woman.

If a man and woman, contrary to law and custom, had sexual contact during the daylight hours, when the family cattle and stock and the children were away from the homestead, a serious form of *thahu* would sooner or later take hold of the children, and they would start to pine and grow weak and thin. Then the man and his wife were prompted by their consciences to have a purification ceremony performed to remove the evil, which they knew was due to their own fault. The man went to a medicine-man, told him what had happened, and asked for his advice. The medicine-man replied that he would come next day early in the morning to purify the family, and meanwhile the husband was given instructions as to the preparations he was to make.

The husband himself had to collect a proportion of the plants that would be used in the ceremony, while the medicine-man would bring the rest with him. These plants were as follows: *mũrerema*, *makũri*, *mũgumo*, *mũkũyũ*, *irigũ rĩa mũtahato*, *kĩgwa*, *ndũma*, *ngwacĩ* (roots and plant), *ng'ondu ya kĩondo*, *ũrutĩ*, *rũmũrĩ*, *mũcingiri*, *coco*, *ng'ondu ya kĩanda*, and *mũhoroha*.

Next morning the medicine-man arrived, and while he sorted through the plants collected by the husband, he sent the wife to fetch a large and a small *kĩnya* gourd of water, and some large banana leaves. (p.1258) When she had returned, he called for the animal which the husband had selected for slaughter, and he anointed its nose and forehead with *ũũmũ* and *ng'ondu* powder mixed with oil. He then made the man, his wife, and all the children who normally slept in the woman's hut sit down in front of the hut. He proceeded to lead the animal for slaughter round the group four times, twice clockwise and twice counter-clockwise, and as he did this he made the husband and wife rub their foreheads against the animal's nose and forehead to associate the animal that was to be killed with themselves. This done, the animal was taken away to be slaughtered, skinned, and cut up by some other neighbouring elders who had been called in, and while this was being done the medicine-man performed a preliminary ceremony of causing the man and his wife to vomit the *thahu*, using for this only water mixed with the five magic powders *ũũmũ*, *mũcanjamũka*, *rũthuko*, *kĩnoria*, and *ng'ondu*. The water was mixed with all these ingredients in a small hole in the ground lined with a banana leaf, and the medicineman used only bunches of twigs to put to the lips of those he was purifying in this preliminary way, and did not use the sheep's foot or the third chamber of the stomach. In other respects this preliminary *ndahĩkio* was performed in the way already described. This having been done, the medicine-man prepared for the second and major part of the purification.

He asked for a large cooking pot and instructed the woman to bring out some stones, make a hearth in the courtyard in front of her hut, light a fire, and set the pot over it. The medicine-man poured a

little water into this pot, and then added to it the plants collected and listed above, most of the stomach contents of the animal slaughtered, and some of each of the same five magic powders used in the preliminary *ndahĩkio*. He then made all the children and the woman concerned—but not the husband—sit down round the fire on which the pot was set. He lifted up the pot, walked round the little group with it once counter-clockwise, and put it back on the fire saying, "*Ndahagĩra thahu ũrĩa ũmũrigicĩte*" (I put the *thahu* that has encircled you on to the fire). He then took the pot off the fire again saying, "*Ndateng'ũra thahu*" (I take the *thahu* off the fire). He repeated this procedure four times and then put the pot finally on to the fire, added a lot more water and leaves, and let all the ingredients boil.

Meanwhile, part of the meat of the slaughtered animal was set to roast and the rest was taken into the woman's hut and put to boil on a fire there. While the meat was cooking, and the contents of the pot with all the plants was boiling, there was a pause in the proceedings. Later the roasted joints were eaten, after which the boiled joints were (p.1259) brought out and the meat and gravy was just "tasted" and put away. The fire was then drawn away from beneath the pot in which the leaves were boiling, and the woman and her children were again made to come and sit round, including grown-up but unmarried daughters. The medicine-man again took the pot off the hearth stones on which it was standing, and he again four times passed it round them, twice clockwise and twice counter-clockwise, saying each time he put the pot back on the stones, "*Ndahagĩra thahu*" (1 put the *thahu* on the fire), and each time he lifted it off, "*Ndateng'ũra thahu*" (I take the *thahu* off the fire). After the last time he took the pot right off the stones and stood it on the ground, saying, "*Ndamwehereria thahu wothe*" (I remove for you and from you all the *thahu*). He then drew off a little of the water in this pot and added it to the small quantity of pure stomach contents which he had earlier laid aside in a half-gourd. To the contents of this half-gourd he also added some of each of the five magic powders already listed above.

Then he had a large, shallow hole dug near the side of the woman's hut, lined it with banana leaves, and poured into it the contents of the pot, together with some cold water. The woman and her children, young and adult, were told to remove all their clothes and wash all over in this bath, using the cooked leaves of the various plants to rub themselves as they did so. While the washing was taking place, all the men temporarily retired beyond the entrance to the homestead.

This ablution having been completed, and the woman and her children having dressed again, the medicine-man came back, and standing behind them, proceeded to wipe all of them from head to heel twice and from heel to head twice with the contents of the half-gourd. He then stood in front of them and similarly wiped them from forehead to toes and from toes to forehead. For this he did not use the normal bunches of twigs as used in all ordinary *ndahĩkio* ceremonies, but used instead two bunches, each of which was composed of four leafy twigs, two of *mũgumo* and two of *mũtei*.

When he had finished he gave the half-gourd, what was left of the contents, and the bunches of leaves, to the woman, and told her to put them in a safe place in her hut until evening. Then the medicine-man rubbed them all with *ira* powder and gave them some of the magic powders to swallow, and his part of the proceedings was over, apart from giving instructions to the husband as to how to complete the purification after dark. This was done as follows.

After the evening meal the husband was to assemble his wife, all the children that slept in that woman's hut, and also her grown-up but unmarried daughters, and make them stand facing the woman's bed (p.1260) with their backs to the hearth. He then took the half-gourd containing the stomach contents, magic powders, etc. that were put into the hut earlier, and using the same two

bunches of *mũgumo* and *mũtei* leaves that had been used by the medicine-man, he wiped his family downwards from head to heel with the contents of the half-gourd twice, and upwards from heel to head twice. Then he came round and stood between his family and the entrance to his wife's bed and wiped them down from face to toes twice and upwards from toes to face twice. This done, the two bunches of leaves were untied, the twigs of one placed at the head end of the bed and those of the other at the foot end, so that when the man and his wife next had sexual intercourse they lay between these two bundles of twigs. The children were told to go to their own bedroom, and the man and his wife had to have ceremonial sexual intercourse twice as an act of sacrifice to mark the end of the purification.

The Ceremony of Ndahĩkio to remove Uncleanness of the Gĩko Type

The particular form of uncleanness known as *gĩko* could be contracted in a number of different ways, and it nearly always necessitated a purification ceremony of the *ndahikio* type to remove it. Although the details of the ceremonies for purification from *gĩko* varied according to the circumstances in which the uncleanness was contracted, in general the *ndahĩkio* for this type of uncleanness followed the same lines. As an example we will take the case of a man who had dwelt for a period among the Maasai and then returned to his family in Kikuyu country. Such a man was held to be unclean in the sense of having *gĩko*, because he had been in contact with Maasai rites and ceremonies while he was resident among people of that tribe. He could not, therefore, be allowed to re-enter his own family circle without being purified, for if he did so, he would probably transmit the uncleanness to the others.

When he arrived back in Kikuyu country, therefore, he **communi**cated with his family but did not enter any of their homesteads, and the ciders of his family made arrangements to provide a ram for a purification ceremony, and engaged a medicine-man to come and conduct the proceedings. The returned traveller was given a smoked banana leaf (*icoya irige*), and was sent down to the nearest stream with instructions to bring up water in this leaf, and at the same time to bring up another fresh banana leaf.

When he came with the water he was led out by the medicine-man to a place in the bush where there was an old overgrown path. A ram (p.1261) was taken along. Here a small hole was dug, lined with the new banana leaf and into it was poured the water. Then the medicine-man proceeded to build two small symbolic huts on either side of the basin. The first these was built of bitter and bad plants such as *mũgere* and *mũcatha*, and represented the hut in Maasai country where he had been living. The second hut was built of good wood such as *mũthakwa*, *mũkeũ*, or *mũkenia* to represent his own Kikuyu home to which he was about to return.

When the symbolic huts were ready, the ram was slaughtered without any ceremony of making it pass round the man, and its stomach contents were put into the basin, together with the water and some of each of the five magic powders always used in *ndahĩkio* ceremonies. Then the man was told to sit inside the hut which symbolized the place he had come from, facing the land of his sojourn. The medicine-man came, and with two bunches of twigs of the ceremonial plants always used, he proceeded to "cause the man to vomit his uncleanness", using the stem ends of the bunch of twigs. This done, the man was made to "come out of the bad hut", step over the water in the basin, enter the "good" hut, and sit down. Five embers were then put into the good hut, which represented his real home. Then the medicine-man solemnly pulled up the sticks of the symbolic bad hut and scattered them far and wide, saying, "*Nĩndatharia nyũmba. Nĩndeheria gĩko gĩa kũrĩa ũratũire*" (I pull down the hut, I remove the uncleanness of the place where you have been living).

Taking the intestines of the slaughtered animal, he encircled the good hut in which the man was squatting by the fire. The man was then again caused to vomit the uncleanness of his temporary home, and this time the medicine-man used the leafy ends of the bundles of twigs for the ceremony. When he had done this, the medicine-man stood by the doorway of the new hut and called to the man to come out. As his face emerged from the door, the medicine-man rubbed *ira* powder on his nose and then told him to remain thus, half in and half out of the door, while he removed the intestines that encircled the hut.

Then he told the man to come right out, and as he did so he rubbed *ira* powder on to his shoulders, navel, the palms of his hands, and his two big toes. Then, with the man standing just outside the door of the good hut, the medicine-man arranged the intestines of the ram so that one end lay between the man's feet on the ground, and then passed through the good hut and out through the back wall. The medicine-man then seized the end projecting through the back wall and pulled, drawing the intestines between the man's legs, through the good hut, and out through the back wall. As he did so, he said, "*Ndagarũra gĩko gĩa* (p.1262) *kũu ũratũire, gĩtigakũrũmĩrire*" (I turn back the uncleanness which belongs to that place where you have been residing, that it may not follow you).

These intestines were then thrown away, and the medicine-man pulled up the sticks forming the symbolic good hut. These he did not throw away, but placed in a neat bundle at the foot of a *mũthakwa* tree. The man was then given some of each of the five magic powders to swallow, after which he was allowed to enter his family homestead. Here he had to take part in the ceremony *kũrĩanĩra* (eating together) after which he resumed normal life in his own home.

The Ceremony of Ndahĩkio to remove Uncleanness of the Rũruto type

As we have already seen, there was a special type of uncleanness that was commonly connected with the building of a new homestead, or the moving of an old homestead to a new site. This type of uncleanness could be contracted in a variety of ways, and the purification ceremonies for all forms of *rũruto* involved a form of *ndahĩkio* purification, of which the following is a typical example.

If members of a family that had just moved or rebuilt on a new site ate the meat of a he-goat, cow, or ox that had died a natural death before the homestead had (had a house-warming ceremony held for it (*rugũria*)—see Chapter 5), then the uncleanness known as *rũruto* took hold of all those who belonged to the homestead. It might be the human inhabitants who suffered most, or it might be the stock, but in either case it was the owner of the homestead and his senior wife that were the principals in the purification ceremony. A medicine-man was called in, and he arranged to come early on the following morning to perform the purification, which consisted of two *ndahĩkio* ceremonies, together with a symbolic moving of the whole homestead.

Having arrived early in the morning, the medicine-man ordered all the fires in the huts to be put out, and he then went into each hut in turn and took some ash from the fireplace, some soil from the doorway, and some sooty thatch from the inside of the roof over the hearth. He then ordered the owner of the homestead and his senior wife to **accom**pany him, and they set off to cross at least two streams before they disposed of this ash, soil, and thatch in the bush. This done, they turned round and started their return journey home. When they reached the first of the two streams, they followed it downstream until they came to **a** place where it was joined by another stream, or by water from a small spring. In South Kikuyu such places were common, and to be found on all streams at intervals.

p.1263
Here the medicine-man dug a small shallow hole in the soil just upstream of the placc where the two streams of water met; he lined it with a banana leaf and filled it with water taken from each of the streams before they joined. Into this water he put some of each of the five magic powders used in all *ndahĩkio* ceremonies. Then he made the man and his wife wash where the two streams met. While they were washing he collected nine twigs of the plants used in *ndahĩkio,* and with his two bunches of twigs he performed the ceremony of *gũtahĩkania* (to perform a cleansing ceremony for people). The mixture in the basin had no stomach contents at all.

Having caused them to vomit the uncleanness of *rũruto,* he then made them wash again **in** the water where the two streams joined, after which he gave them magic powders to swallow and anointed them with *ira* powder. This done, he told them to follow him, and on the ridge above the stream they all picked small bundles of grass, and collected a bag full of soil. The medicine-man himself picked two *mũthakwa* sticks for each hut in the homestead. Taking these things, they crossed the next stream and returned to the homestead that was to be purified and "moved". Here the medicine-man laid the collected articles by the granaries, and sent the woman at once to fetch a banana leaf and water from the river.

While she was gone he dug a shallow basin outside her hut, and when she returned he lined this with a banana leaf, put in the water and magic powders, and proceeded to *iahikia* the man, his senior wife, and their children, again using only water and magic powders and no stomach contents. When he had done this, and had also wiped them in the ceremonial way from head to foot and foot to head as described several times in this chapter, and when he had given them more of the five magic powders to swallow and anointed them with *ira* powder, he said to the man, "Now go and build a new homestead". This was done symbolically by taking two *mũthakwa* sticks to each hut, and setting one up by the door of each hut and one at the back part of the wall. The medicine-man himself then took the new grass which they had brought from the top of the ridge, and he put a little into the thatch of each hut above each doorway. Then he took the bag of soil from the top of the ridge, and in each hut in turn he placed some of this soil on the hearth and some on the doorway. Next the medicine-man made fire out in the courtyard with his fire drill, and on this fire he placed *mũtamaiyũ* (wild olive) wood. When the fire was burning brightly he told the man and his wife to take fire-brands from it to each hut and to light new fires to take the place of those put out in the morning.

p.1264
The whole homestead was then symbolically "new", and the medicine-man gave the owner some of the same five magic powders used in the *tahĩkia* ceremony, and told him that after dark he was to put some of each into each fire in the homestead, so that the residents of each hut might sit round and be further purified by this magic smoke.

In the afternoon, after the medicine-man had left, a small quantity of beer was set to brew, and next day the ceremony of *kũrugũria mũciĩ* (to have a house-warming party) took place, lest further delay should cause some other type of *rũruto* or uncleanness to appear.

The Ceremony of Ndahĩkio to remove Uncleanness of the Mũrimũ type

Certain forms of disease and illness, such as smallpox, were believed to leave the survivor in an unclean state, and before he could resume normal life he had to undergo a ceremonial purification.

A medicine-man was called in, and he took the person who had been ill, down to a stream or river, along with a small ram for a male patient, or, for a female patient, a virgin ewe. At the stream the medicine-man slaughtered it, and divided its stomach contents into two. He then dug a large hole near the bank of the stream, lined it with banana leaves, and into it put half the stomach contents, water from the stream, and some of each of the following magic powders: *rũthuko*, *ũũmu*, and *ng'ondu*. In this bath he made the patient wash himself, all his ornaments, and his clothing. Having washed in this mixture, he was then to wash in pure river water and come upstream where he would find the medicine-man.

When he came to the medicine-man, he was first given a lump of fat from the slaughtered animal and told to rub this all over himself, his leather garment, and his ornaments. This done, the medicine-man made him sit down by a small "basin" in the soil which contained the rest of the stomach contents, together with the five magic powders used in all *ndahĩkio* ceremonies. Using first the animal's foot and the third chamber of the stomach, and then bunches of leaves as normally used, the medicine-man purified the man further by the *ndahĩkio* ceremony and the ceremony of wiping him up and down.

The patient was then given some of the five magic powders to swallow and was rubbed with *ira* powder, as were his garments. This completed the ceremony as far as the mcdicine-man was concerned, but the patient had then to go and find a woman who had recovered from the same complaint that he had just recovered from, and get her to shave his head for him completely, and anoint his scalp with oil. (p.1265) Only after this had been done was he considered to be absolutely free from the uncleanness, and he might then re-enter his homestead.

Even after this, for the duration of one moon he had to keep to himself, sleep by himself, and eat by himself, after which he might resume normal life. Although the purification for a *mũrimũ* was thus a ceremonial one from the Kikuyu point of view, it provided a reasonably good way of disinfecting and isolating a person who had a serious disease, until his freedom from it was certain.

The Ceremony of Ndahĩkio to purify a Woman who was Guardian of a Divining Gourd

It sometimes happened that the woman who was the guardian of a divining gourd, or else one of her grown-up unmarried daughters, in some way contravened the laws which governed her and her family in her duty of guardianship, and then both the divining gourd and she herself became unclean. The way in which the divining gourd was purified has been described in Chapter 26, but the special form of ndahĩkio which was required for the purification of the guardian was not described in that chapter and must be given here.

In such cases the purification of the divining gourd always took place first, and then the owner of the gourd arranged with some other medicine-man to come and purify the woman and those of her children who normally slept in her hut. On the day before that chosen for the ceremony, the owner of the divining gourd had beer brewed, and the first ndua to be filled was placed on top of a circlet of *mũrerema* leaves. Some of the leaves of this plant were also used to cover the mouth of the ndua during the night.

Early next morning, the medicine-man who had been called in, arrived with his bag of magic powders and placed it in the hut of the woman who was to be purified. He did not, however, place it anywhere near the owner's bag of magic powders and divining gourd, but near the hearth.

Having done this, he waited while the owner of the homestead took some of the beer and made the normal offerings to God and the spirits of departed members of the profession, which all medicine-

men made when they brewed beer in connection with their profession. This done, the medicine-man who had been called in took a little beer in a gourd drinking cup and poured it out by his bag of magic powders, with a prayer to the spirits of dead medicine-men to bless the ceremony which he was to perform that day.

p.1266
Then the two medicine-men went out together to *hũnga mĩtĩ* (to collect the necessary plants for the ceremony). These were very numerous. The plants in the list given in connection with the ceremony as performed for a breach of social law and custom had to be collected, along with another series, some of which were the same, and some different. This series had to be composed of leaves of the following plants: *ng'ondu*, *ng'ondu ya kĩanda*, *mũtharia-ndundu*, *mũgumo*, *mũkũyũ, coco*, *ũrutĩ*, and leaves and roots of the sweet potato called *nyamũirũ* (a dark coloured variety). They also had to collect and bring with them some *mũrerema* leaves and creepers. While out, they also went to a sugar-cane field and cut two canes, one of the variety known as *nyamũirũ* (dark coloured), and one of the variety known as *nyamwerũ* (light coloured). These two canes had to be brought to the homestead with their leaves intact.

When the two men arrived back at the homestead, the woman who was to be purified was sent to the river to fetch water and banana leaves. While she was doing this, the beer was brought out into the courtyard and was poured off after a hornful had first been drawn off as the *mũguĩ* ("the medicine-man's arrow"—that is, the beer poured off for them), and another hornful for the *mahuti* (the first hornful of beer) to be sent to a relative of the brewer of the beer.

The dregs of the beer were left for the time being in the *ndua* brewing gourd, and the *mũrerema* leaves, which were under it and with which it was corked while it was brewing, were placed for the moment on a winnowing tray in the courtyard. When the woman came back with the water and banana leaves, these were laid aside for the time being and she was told to bring out a large cooking pot and some stones to make a hearth for it. The neck of the pot was encircled with the fresh *mũrerema* leaves picked in the morning, after which she and her children sat down by this improvised outdoor hearth and the pot was put on the stones.

Into the pot the medicine-man put a little water, all the plants of the first group collected, and some of the following five magic powders: *ũũmũ*, *mũcanjamũka*, *ng'ondu*, *kĩnoria*, and *rũthuko*. He then proceeded to *thiũrũra*, or pass the pot round the woman and her children, twice clockwise and twice counter-clockwise, after which he set it back on the stones, added more water, and left it to boil. When it had boiled the fire was drawn out from beneath it and some cold water was added. Then the woman and her children again sat round it, and the medicine-man lifted it off the stones and passed it round them again twice clockwise and twice counter-clockwise, after which he set the pot on the ground instead of back on the stones of the hearth. This (p.1267) done he placed the second lot of leaves on a wooden board, and proceeded to beat them to a pulp with the small wooden pestle which was normally used by the woman to crush castor oil berries. This leaf pulp was made to represent undigested stomach contents of a goat or sheep, and it was used in place of stomach contents in the ceremonies which followed, for no animal was ever slaughtered for this ceremony.

When the leaves had been completely pulped, they were divided into three lots; some were placed in a half-gourd and laid aside for the time being under the eaves of the hut, some were put into a basin lined with banana leaves which had been dug in front of the hut, and some were laid aside to be put into the cooking pot presently.

Some of the mixture in the cooking pot he poured into the half-gourd containing a portion of the pulped leaves, and some more of it into the basin, after which he put the pulp that was temporarily laid aside into such water as was left in the pot. Then he had another hole dug and lined with banana leaves, and into this the remaining water was poured, together with all the boiled leaves. Now the medicine-man made the woman and children sit down by the basin, and he proceeded to *tahĩkia* them, using first a dry sheep's foot from his bag of powders, and a piece of wood of the plant called *mũkũũra*, which almost every medicine-man kept in his outfit for such circumstances as this.

When he was about to start the ceremony he added to the contents of the basin a little dried stomach contents of hyrax which he had brought with him, and which again was a thing every medicine-man kept ready for this type of ceremony. He also added the dregs of the beer that were left in the *ndua* gourd. Having cleansed the woman and her children with these two objects, he took two bunches of leaves of the ordinary plants used in all *ndahĩkio* ceremonies, and which he had asked the owner of the homestead to collect for him, and cleansed the woman, first with the stem ends, and then the leafy ends. As he did this the other medicine-man, whose wife was being purified, held his right elbow so as to be associated in the ceremony.

When the *ndahĩkio* was over, the woman and her children were made to wash in the liquid in the larger basin, after which they came and stood before the medicine-man and were wiped downwards and upwards from behind, and from in front, in the manner known as *kũinamia* (to turn downwards) and *gũtiira* (to support or hold up). Then they were anointed with *ira* powder.

Next the medicine-man broke off the leafy tops of the two canes of sugar-cane, and stuck these into the thatch over the entrance to the (p.1268) woman's hut. Having done so, he handed one cane to the man and one to his wife, and told them to go into their hut, taking these and the half-gourd containing the pulped leaves with them. Here each was to chew several mouthfuls of cane, spit the juice into the half-gourd, and then come out again with it. Then the medicine-man took the half-gourd and its contents, and gave it to the woman to hold in front of her in her cupped hands; the man was sent to fetch four *mũgumo* leaves and four *mũtei* leaves. While these were being fetched he made the woman (who was holding the half-gourd) and her children each swallow a mixture of the five magic powders mentioned earlier.

Then the medicine-man took the *mũgumo* and *mũtei* leaves that had been brought, and putting two of each together so that he had two bunches, he proceeded to *haka ng'ondu* (to wipe (the woman and her children) from head to foot with the *ng'ondu* mixture). In doing so he adopted the same method as when wiping them in the ceremony of *kũinamia* and *gũtiira*. Having completed this, he told the woman to place this half-gourd and what was left of its contents in her storeroom until nightfall, and he proceeded to clear up the banana leaf basins, the boiled leaves, and the withered *mũrerema* leaves, and carried them all out of the homestead and into the bush.

What was left of each of the two sticks of sugar-cane was then eaten by the husband and wife. The ceremony was now nearly over, the beer was brought out, and the greater part of it given to the medicine-man who had conducted the proceedings, and he, his host, and such elders who had come to watch the proceedings, started to drink.

That night, when everyone had retired, the owner of the homestead made his wife get out the half-gourd with the pulped leaves, and he proceeded to wipe her and her children all over with it, using the little bunches of *mũgumo* and *mũtei* leaves to do so. Having done this, the leaves were placed at the head and foot of his wife's bed and the half-gourd at the head, and he and his wife had

ceremonial sexual intercourse. This completed the purification, and the two might once more resume normal life without fear that the uncleanness caused by the woman's behaviour would affect either of them.

Ceremonial Purification of the type known as Kũhorohia

Certain forms of ceremonial uncleanness which were not considered very severe were removed by means of the ceremony of *kũhorohia* ("to make peaceful" or "to make cold"). This ceremony usually, but not always, involved the slaughter of a goat or sheep, but it was nevertheless (p.1269) much simpler than the ceremonies of *ndahĩkio*, and did not require the calling in of a medicine-man in normal circumstances.

In dealing with various forms of *ndahĩkio* ceremonies, we noted that drawing of human blood was believed to cause uncleanness on the part of both the person from whom the blood was drawn, as well as the one who caused the wound. In many cases such drawing of blood involved a *ndahĩkio* ceremony of the type already described in that connection, but if the people involved were neither related, nor members of the same initiation lodge, then the uncleanness was less severe and might be removed by the ceremony of *kũhorohia*.

for this purpose a small immature goat or sheep of either sex was slaughtered, either by the father of one of the parties or else by other council elders. The animal was slaughtered to provide blood and undigested stomach contents for the purification. There were very minor variations of this ceremony of *kũhorohia*, depending upon the age and sex of the parties concerned, and the circumstances in which the blood was drawn, but all of them followed the same general lines, and as an illustration we will describe the procedure if two unrelated members of the warrior classes fought and drew blood.

In such a case the ceremony of purification did not involve the person who caused the wound at all. Only the wounded person had to be purified. For this purpose he himself, or his father, provided a small ram, and then a few council elders were called in to conduct the ceremony. They brought with them some other member of the warrior class who had not been involved in the quarrel at all, and provided this man with a stem of *mũthakwa* wood rubbed over with some of the blood of the slaughtered animal to represent the weapon that had drawn blood. They instructed this third party to pretend to strike the wounded person, and as he did so they prevented him from striking the man, took the symbolic weapon from him, and anointed it with stomach contents so as to wipe off the blood stains. Then they rubbed the stick over with raw fat and threw it away. This done, the warrior called in to play this part in the ceremony was dismissed, and the elders proceeded to the ceremony of *kũhorohia thakame* (to make the blood peaceful).

Taking a little of the blood of the ram, they rubbed it on the wounded warrior's forehead, the points of both shoulders, his neck, his navel, the palms of his cupped hands, and his ankles. This represented the blood of his wound, and then the elders used the stomach contents to remove each of these bloody marks, by applying it and making a gesture of plucking it off saying, "*Twakũũra thakame*" (We uproot the blood). Next all of these places were rubbed over with raw fat, and (p.1270) two *ngwaro* strips were made, one from the stomach of the animal and one from the skin, one of which would be fastened on the man's right arm.

If his real wound was not a serious one, he was sent to the nearest stream to wash, and at the stream he had to discard these strips, tear them to pieces, and throw them away. If, however, the wound was regarded as serious and as likely to take a long time to heal, the man was not sent to the river

to wash, but had to retain the *ngwaro* strips until it was clear that the wounds were healing satisfactorily.

The reason why, in the case of one warrior drawing blood from another, the former did not participate in the ceremony, was that the wounded warrior would be anxious to revenge himself later, and if his assailant took part in the ceremony he would be debarred from trying to do so. Apart from fights between warriors, if any two people who were unrelated and who did not belong to the same initiation lodge fought and blood was drawn, both took part in the purification ceremony and both were cleansed.

If children who had not yet been through the second birth ceremony fought and one drew blood from the other, the purification ceremony was even more simple, and no special animal had to be slaughtered, it being sufficient to use lumps of raw fat from any ram or ewe that happened to have been killed in the district for some other purpose, to represent the blood, the stomach contents, and the fat.

If any two people, whether boys or men, fought and drew blood while herding stock, they not only rendered themselves unclean, but also the stock, and in such a case, not only did they have to undergo the ceremony of *kũhorohia thakame*, but the stock had also to be purified, as had the staves which they normally used in herding.

The ceremony of *kũhorohia* was by no means confined to the removal of uncleanness caused by human blood, and there were many other occasions which called for a somewhat similar ceremony which was not accompanied by *ndahikio*. Thus, if a hyena dunged inside the confines of any homestead during the night, as soon as the dung was discovered the next morning, the owner of the homestead, or in his absence on a journey, his senior wife, went out to look for a few very old men who had ceased to be sexually potent, and they were called in to come and *horohia mai* (make the dung peaceful). They were provided with a small ram to be slaughtered out in the bush, and they returned with the stomach contents and two pieces of green banana bark.

First they squeezed some of the juices from the stomach contents over the dung, saying as they did so, "*Twahoria ũhiũhu wa mai ma hiti*" (p.1271) (We make cold (peaceful) the heat of the dung of the hyena). Then they scooped up the dung with the pieces of banana bark and covered it over with stomach contents, also sprinkling stomach contents on the ground where the dung had been. This done, they solemnly carried out the dung saying as they went, "*Twaumagaria hiti*" (We escort the hyena out of the homestead). The dung and banana bark were then thrown far away, and the old men went back and ate the meat of the ram. No one else whatever might share that meat, for if any person still capable of functioning sexually did so, he would convey the uncleanness of death, which was caused by contact with the dung of hyenas (which ate dead human bodies), to those with whom he had sexual contact.

Although undigested stomach contents were the principal agent used in the ceremony of *kũhorohia*, other substances were used occasionally. Thus, in the case of a young man who became defiled by the menstrual blood of a girl and discovered the fact before he departed, the girl could perform a simple ceremony of *kũhorohia* with fresh cow dung. Occasionally, too, sheep's fat alone was used, but artificial stomach contents in the form known as *ng'ondu* (pulped leaves) could never be used for a ceremony of *kũhorohia*.

Ceremonial Purification of the type known as Gwakĩria Icua (*To light a Bonfire for . . .*)

When a group of people, such as the members of a family or a regiment of warriors, were considered to be suffering together from some form of ceremonial uncleanness, the normal method of purification was by means of lighting a bonfire (*icua*), upon which were placed magic powders, together with the green leaves of a variety of plants. The people to be purified were made to sit round in the smoke, which acted as a purifying agent. In all cases of purification by such a fire it was necessary to slaughter a ram, so that the bones, its undigested stomach contents, and the fourth chamber of the stomach might be deluded in the material to be heaped upon the fire.

In some cases, as for example the purification of warriors before they went out to raid the Maasai (see Chapter 24), the fire had to be lit by a medicine-man, who had also to provide a variety of magic powders to be put on the bonfire.

In other cases it was not uncommon for the head of a homestead to arrange for a private ceremony of lighting a fire without calling in a medicine-man. The following is an example of this type of purification.

p.1272
If a man found that his family and his stock were not flourishing, and having consulted a diviner was told that the cause of his trouble was some general and unspecified uncleanness which was affecting all that he owned, as well as all those who were dependent upon him and who lived in his homestead. This general uncleanness could be removed only by a bonfire ceremony.

The man went home and arranged with all the residents of his homestead to be present on a given evening. That night, when all were within the confines of the homestead, he took a ram out and solemnly led it once round the outside of the homestead walls clockwise. The ram was then taken to the senior wife's hut to be tied to her bed for the night. Early next morning, before any other members of the family were up, the ram was led out and taken round the homestead counter-clockwise. The family was then roused and the animal was slaughtered, skinned, and cut up. It was important that the fires in every hut were burning all night and that none should go out. Should any fire have gone out, the ram would not be slaughtered and the ceremony would be restaged on the following night but one.

When the ram was cut up, the fourth chamber of the stomach, the top part of the skull, and some of the fat, were laid aside, and all the rest of the meat was roasted and eaten by the family; none was boiled. The members of the family were then allowed to separate and go about their business for the day, but all were warned to be sure to assemble in the evening before the goats and sheep returned from grazing.

During the afternoon the owner of the homestead collected the leaves of the following plants: *mũkũyũ*, *rũmũrĩ*, *ikũri*, *coco*, *mũgumo*, *mũcingiri*, *ũrutĩ*, *mũtei*, and a *mwarĩki* (castor oil) plant that had not yet come into fruit. He also had a small quantity of honey beer prepared and set to brew in his senior wife's hut.

In the afternoon, too, he got one of his wives to cut fuel of *mũtamaiyũ* and *mũtei* wood. Just before the flocks were due to return to the homestead, he made sure that all the residents of the homestead had come in, and if they had not he did not allow the stock to enter, but kept them waiting outside until everyone was present. Then, when the flocks, herds, and all his family and dependents were in the courtyard, he fetched fire from his senior wife's hut, and with this he lit a fire in the centre of the courtyard, using the *mũtamaiyũ* and *mũtei* wood. On to this fire he placed the stomach contents of the ram, the fourth chamber of the stomach, the skull, the fat, the bones, the leaves

used to lay the meat on when it was cut up, all the sticks used for the roasting platform, and the skewers. Then he put on the fire the leaves of the (p.1273) plants collected in the afternoon, followed last of all by a handful of raw honey in the comb. Then all the people and goats and sheep were made to walk round so that each was purified by the smoke. No one might leave the vicinity of the fire and enter a hut until the bonfire had burnt down. Then the sheep and goats were driven to the huts in which they normally slept, and everybody went into the hut where he or she normally slept, and they all had supper. After supper the owner 0f the homestead went out to the dying fire, drew all the embers together, and put on a few large pieces of *mũtamaiyũ* wood, and everyone retired to bed.

Early next morning the man sprinkled some of the honey beer that had been put to brew on to the remains of the fire and prayed to the supreme God, Ngai, to give his blessing to the family, and the ceremony was over.

A variation of the ceremony of purification by *gwakĩria icua* was that in which a series of specially prepared torches (*icinga*) were used in place of a bonfire. A purification by this torch method was usually carried out when the bad luck that was plaguing a homestead was diagnosed as being due to a vague form of *thahu*. The purification by this means could be carried out only with the aid of the medicine-man who was the "family doctor" to that group, and not a specialist called in from another village.

On the day before the ceremony, the head of the homestead brewed beer and invited the medicine-man to come early next morning. When he arrived, he took his bag of magic powders straight to the hut of the senior wife where the beer was brewing and hung it up there by her bed. Then he and the head of the family together made an offering of beer to both God and the departed spirits, including those of deceased members of the *ũgo* procession.

This done, the two men went out into the bush together to collect the plants necessary for making the torches, together with some dry wood of the same plants, namely *mũkũyũ*, *mũgumo*, *mũkenia*, *mũkeũ*, *coco*, and *mũkũri*. They also collected *mũkeũ* bark, a few twigs of *mũcingiri*, with the pods of the plant on, and a few heads of unripe castor oil berries. They returned to the homestead with these things, and then the medicine-man proceeded to make up as many torches as there were huts to the homestead. Each torch had to have both dry wood and green leaves of all the above listed plants.

When the torches were ready, the medicine-man called for some castor oil, which he mixed with *ũũmũ* and *rũthuko* powders. This paste he rubbed over the bunches of castor oil berries and the twigs of *mũcingiri* with the pods on them. He also similarly treated the *mũkeũ* (p.1274) bark. Then he emptied into a bit of dry banana bark some of each of the following magic powders: *thenge*, *thiari*, *rũthuko*, *mũcanjamũka kĩnoria*, and *mũgoco*. These he mixed thoroughly and gave to the man who had invoked his aid, telling him to put them away until nightfall. The medicine-man instructed him that he was later to insert some of the powders into each torch, after which he was to light a small fire of wild olive wood in the centre of the courtyard, using embers from his senior wife's hut to do so. He was to light each torch in turn at this fire, and take them to the huts in succession. After being given these details of how he was to act, the man gave the *mũndũ mũgo* a goat skin as his fee, and the two, together with any other *kĩama* elders from the village who had come in, proceeded to drink beer.

That evening, when all the stock and all the members of the family had come home and were in their respective huts, the head of the family put the magic powders into the torches, lit the fire in the courtyard as directed, and proceeded as follows.

He lit one torch at the fire and went to his own hut; he walked all round poking the smoking and flaming torch into all corners, saying, "*Ndamũrĩka mũciĩ, gũkũ gũthahũke*" (I make a fight for the homestead that the place may lose its uncleanness). He then put the torch on the hearth and went out and fetched a head of castor oil berries and a twig of *mũcingiri*, both treated with magic powder, and stuck these into the thatch on the inside of the roof over the hearth. Next he fetched one of the bits of *mũkeũ* bark, also treated with magic powders, and tied this round one of the roof supports.

Having thus purified his own hut, he proceeded to do the same things in each of his wives' huts in the order of their seniority. In the women's huts he was careful to carry his lighted torch to the *kwerũ* (where the goats and sheep slept), to the children's bed (*kĩrĩrĩ*), and to the wife's bed (*ũrĩrĩ*). As he did this he said, "*Ndamũrĩka mbũri*" (I make a light for the goats and sheep), "*Ndamũrĩka ciana*" (I make a light for the children), "*Ndamũrĩka mũka wakwa aciare*" (I make a light for my wife that she may be fruitful).

By this ceremony the whole homestead was cleansed from the impurity and uncleanness which had caused it ill luck, and the man, his family, and his flocks and herds started to prosper. After three planting seasons the medicine-man was entitled to return, and, if the home was then really prosperous, he demanded one ram and one ewe as a further fee, but if his cleansing powders had not had the desired result, there was no further fee payable, for, "the payment was by results"·

p.1275

Ceremonial Purification by Sex Acts

Although a great many of the occasions which required ceremonial sex acts were occasions for a sacrifice, rather than for purification, there were also occasions when the sex act was performed ritually as a means of purification from certain types of uncleanness. The chief idea underlying purification by sexual intercourse was that by sexual contact two people become more closely unified than by any other means, and the contagion which was inherent in all forms of uncleanness was completely transferred from the affected person to the other party. Since certain forms of uncleanness could affect only certain individuals, it was obvious that sexual intercourse with someone who was not subject to that uncleanness would remove it and render it ineffectual.

Thus a woman who had given birth in any unnatural way, that is, whose baby had been born feet first, or who had had twins, or had had a child with six fingers, or any other unnatural feature, was required to have sexual intercourse with some man other than her husband before she could again resume normal relations with him. The underlying idea was that the man called in to perform the act of purification could not be affected adversely by the uncleanness, although it would pass to him by the act of sexual contact with the "unclean" wife. Having passed to the stranger, the *thahu* became sterilised, whereas if the legal husband of the woman had contact with her, the uncleanness would pass to him and it would become immediately active, because he and his wife were legally one and the same person.

Another and different act of purification was that which took place between a husband and wife a month after she had had a normal birth, and which was called *gũtinia mĩruru ya mwana* (the sacrifice for ending the uncleannesses of birth). In such a case, the birth having been perfectly normal, there was no sexual uncleanness on the part of the mother, but the child was unclean

because of his or her contact with the birth blood (*mĩruru*), and the mother was unclean because of her contact with the unclean child. The uncleanness of the child was removed by means of a ritual sex act between the mother and the legal father. The father in this case contracted the uncleanness of the birth blood, but as an adult male he was not subject to this form of uncleanness, so that once the *thahu* had been transferred to him it because sterilised and the child and mother were freed from it.

In the ceremony of *kũhukũra*, which was part of all death ceremonies, members of the Kikuyu initiation guild provided for ritual sex acts (p.1276) which were primarily a sacrifice, but were also a ritual purification to annul the uncleanness caused by death.

As we have already seen, people who had touched a dead body either in connection with ceremonies for the disposal of the dead or by killing an enemy, were forbidden to have any sexual contact with any woman—whether legal wife or lover—until they had been purified by the *ndahĩkio* ceremony. Should they do so, they rendered themselves clean at once, but transferred the uncleanness to the other party. This would seem to be a simple way of obtaining purification from the uncleanness of contact with death, but it was not practised, because the uncleanness of death would affect any person to whom it was thus transferred, and should such a person then die as a result of the *thahu* thus transferred, the person who had purified himself by this means would become liable in law to pay full compensation for the death of the other person.

In other words, to attempt to purify oneself from the uncleanness of death by a sex act was a criminal offence and was very rarely attempted. A person who did in fact thus purify himself would still submit to the purification of *ndahĩkio*, even though aware that it was unnecessary, rather than admit that he had disregarded the law and transferred his *thahu* to another person.

In fact, the only way in which his wrong-doing would be discovered would be through the woman to whom he had transferred his *thahu*, should she subsequently become aware that the man who had slept with her was at the time suffering from the uncleanness of contact with death. She would then repeat the matter to the council elders in order to save her own life, and the offender would be made to pay all expenses involved in the woman's purification by *ndahĩkio*, plus a fine to the elders for his having broken the law.

The Significance of Stomach Contents (*Taatha*)

Every reader must have noticed by now that of all the various things used in purification ceremonies of almost every type, the commonest was *taatha*, or the undigested stomach contents of a ram, ewe, or (in rare instances) a small immature he-goat. As an alternative, a sort of artificial *taatha*, called *ng'ondu*, was made by pounding the leaves of a number of plants into pulp. Another alternative used in rare instances was fresh cow dung.

Why should undigested stomach contents have this special virtue (p.1277) of purification? The answer is to be found in the Kikuyu conception of plants, and of the food plants of sheep. The Kikuyu divided all plants into *mĩtĩ mĩhoro* and *mĩtĩ mĩhiũ*, peaceful plants, and hot, angry slants. Among the former were classed grasses, and all plants which were non-poisonous and had soft leaves and no thorns. Among the latter were classed plants with thorns, plants with hard leaves, and plants that were poisonous or particularly bitter, which were the type used in ceremonies of cursing, or of taking oaths.

Sheep of both sexes ate only *mĩtĩ mĩhoro*, non-thorny and non-poisonous plants, that is, the good ones, so that their undigested stomach contents consisted entirely of a well mixed mass of good plant substances.

In contrast, the undigested stomach contents of he-goats or adult female goats contained the remains of leaves of all manner of thorny or bitter plants that were classified as bad. Hence the stomach contents of such animals were never used at all, except occasionally in making the magic powder called *thenge*.

On the other hand, the stomach contents of young immature goats of either sex—and especially of those that were so young that they had not yet been sent out to graze, but had only eaten sweet potato vine and other things picked for them as fodder, were considered to be passable in emergency for purification, for they too, ate leaves of good, rather than bad, plants.

The only other animal whose stomach contents were used in purification ceremonies was the tree hyrax, which the Kikuyu believed lived exclusively on good plants.

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Chapter 29 – The Ituĩka Ceremonies

Introduction
The Ituĩka Ceremony

Introduction

When I was doing research for this book in 1939 I had the co-operation and help of the leading elders of South Kikuyu, and in consequence I was able to write about many subjects with a wealth of detail that would otherwise have been impossible.

I had been assured that when the time came for me to collect information about the *ituĩka* (the handing over of tribal responsibility from one generation to another), I should still have that co-operation, but I found that in this one respect my hopes were not to be fulfilled.

Four representatives of the ruling *Mwangi* generation were called together from every territorial unit from the Ghania River southwards to Ngong, and the question of whether or not complete information about the *ituĩka* rites and ceremonies was to be disclosed to me was discussed at length by those representatives, both in private sessions of their own, and also in sessions to which I and Chief Koinange were invited.

The time was, in fact, overdue for the generation to which Chief Koinange and I belonged—the *Mũirũngũ* generation—to take over, but this could not be done until every single male member of that generation in South Kikuyu had paid the requisite fees to the ruling generation.

The question at issue was whether or not I should be allowed to know the full details and information about the *ituĩka* ceremonies before our generation had paid the fees which entitled them to this information. Just when it seemed likely that the result of the deliberations would be favourable, a group of young Kikuyu, who were opposed to the idea of giving information to Europeans, threatened that if the elders of the ruling generation gave me the information, they would exert their influence to prevent the members of the *Mũirũngũ* generation from subsequently paying their fees. As this would have meant a loss to the elders of the ruling generation of some

10,000 or more goats and rams, the threat, naturally, influenced the representatives of the *Mwangi* generation. They decided not to give me the information, and the negotiations broke down.

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There was still a likelihood, however, that within a year or two the members of my generation would have paid all the requisite fees to the *Mwangi* generation, and have become the ruling generation. Then I would have been able to obtain a full account of the *ituĩka* ceremonies before the elders who had the knowledge had all passed on to the spirit world.

For a variety of reasons, however, this particular *ituĩka* ceremony never actually took place, and I was not able to get the information I wanted. This chapter, therefore, will be limited to a bare statement of such facts about the *ituĩka* as were common knowledge to all Kikuyu, whether they belonged to the ruling generation or not.

As we have already seen in the study of the organisation of the warrior regiments (see Chapter 18), the word *riika* in Kikuyu was used in three quite distinct ways. There was the *riika* or age-group composed of all the men and women who were actually initiated into adult status in any one year. The men of such an initiation *riika* then formed one of nine divisions necessary for a complete regiment *riika*. Even after nine initiation *riika* had completed the formation of a regiment *riika*, allowing the regiment *riika* senior to it to retire, the senior members retained the status of a single regiment *riika*. The third use of the word *riika* was to denote all the males of a single generation, and the generation *riika* had the very greatest importance in the whole social organisation of the life of the tribe.

Each generation age-group was in turn vested with the responsibility for tribal government, including the conducting of religious ceremonies and the control of law and justice. Generally speaking, the term of office of a generation *riika* was from 30-35 years, when theoretically, all members of that generation retired from public life. In practice, however, men who were still in the prime of life had the right to "move down", and to become temporary members of the generation that took over the government. This "moving down" involved the payment of a fee by the person concerned. Similarly, any member of the younger generation could move up and become a temporary member of the generation that was in power if he paid the requisite fee of *ndegwa ya kwambatĩra* (an ox for moving up). This right was in fact exercised only by such men of the younger generation as wished to conduct initiation ceremonies in their own homesteads, which no man might do unless he was a member of the ruling generation.

Such moving up for a special purpose by payment of a fee did not entitle the person who thus moved up, to full information about the *ituĩka* ceremonies, and he did not acquire this until the generation to which he belonged took over. He then rejoined his own generation.

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Each generation *riika* in Kikuyu had two names, that of its grandfather's generation, and its own, and these were part of a cycle of names which were repeated every nine generations. In Chapter 1 of this study, the elder Kabetũ, in the story of his life, tells us that there were only two generation names, *Maina* and *Mwangi*, and that the *Maina* generation gave birth to the *Mwangi* and vice versa, hut the complete story is more complicated than this. Kabetũ himself belonged to the *Mwangi* generation, and his father's generation was called *Maina*. Kabetũ's children belonged in their turn to a generation called *Maina*, which was the generation *riika* name they inherited from their grandfather's generation. They also had their own generation name however, which was *Mũirũngũ*.

Their children in turn inherited the generation *riika* name of *Mwangi* from Kabetũ's generation *riika*, as well as having their own generation name, which was *Mũrigarũ*.

Correctly speaking, the generation *riika* name which was inherited by a generation from its grandfather's generation should have the qualifying words *wa Ithong'o*. In other words, Kabetũ's sons and others of their generation could have said either, "We belong to the *Maina wa Ithong'o* generation" or, "We belong to the *Mũirũngũ* generation".

Kabetũ's own generation, the *Mwangi*, who were still in power in 1939, had *Mwangi* as their own specific name, but they were also correctly known as *Iregi wa Ithong'o*, since they were the grandchildren of a generation that was called *Iregi*.

As soon as a generation had taken over control of the tribal affairs they ceased to use their inherited name and were known only by their specific name. The specific name of any generation was determined by the position of that generation in the nine generation cycle, and each successive generation took the same specific name as the one that was in power nine whole generations back. The following table sets out the nine generation cycle and shows not only the specific, but also the inherited names of the generations.

Inherited Name of the Generation	*Specific Name*
1. Mũirũngũ (*wa Ithong'o*)	*1. Mandũti*
2. Mũrigarũ (*wa Ithong'o*)	*2. Mathaathi*
3. Mandũti (*wa Ithong'o*)	*3. Ciĩra*
4. Mathaathi (*wa Ithong'o*)	*4. Ndemi*
5. Ciĩra (*wa Ithong'o*)	*5. Iregi*
6. Ndemi (*wa Ithong'o*)	*6. Maina*
7. Iregi (*wa Ithong'o*)	*6. Mwangi*
8. Maina (*wa Ithong'o*)	*8. Mũirũngũ*
9. Mwangi (*wa Ithong'o*)	*9. Mũrigarũ*

p.1281
New cycle begins:

1. Mũirũngũ (*wa Ithong'o*)	*1. Mandũti*
2. Mũngarũ (*wa Ithong'o*)	*2 Mathaathi*

Thus, every tenth generation started off a new cycle with the same inherited and the same specific name as the generation nine before it, and in each four successive generations the same name appeared twice, once as an inherited name and once as a specific name. As we have already stated, the generation that was in power in 1939 was that known as *Mwangi* (whose inherited name was *Iregi wa Ithong'o*), but had it not been for the presence of Europeans in the country, which upset all normal procedure, the generation known as *Mũirũngũ* (or *Maina wa Ithong'o*) would by then have taken over control.

The older members of the *Mũirũngũ* generation were about 70 years old in 1939, and not only had children who would form the *Mũrigarũ* generation, but also grandchildren who would form the *Mandũti* generation that could have started off a new nine generation cycle.

There have been suggestions in two books published by Kikuyu writers, *An African Speaks for His People*, by Parmenas Gĩthĩndu and *Facing Mount Kenya*, by Jomo Kenyatta, that the *ituĩka* ceremonies started only with the generation called *Iregi*, who revolted against the despotic rule of a king called Gĩkũyũ, who was the grandchild of the original Gĩkũyũ, the founder of the tribe. So far as my information goes there is not the slightest evidence that the *ituĩka* ceremonies started

only with the generation called *Iregi*, and in fact all the senior elders with whom I discussed the matter disagreed with this.

The two writers above mentioned did not say whether they meant the *Iregi* generation of the present nine generation cycle, or that of the preceding nine generation cycle, but it may be presumed that they did not refer to the *Iregi* of the present cycle, since the whole system of the generation *riika* was based upon the *ituĩka* ceremony, and we know that there were four such generations before the *Iregi* within the present cycle.

The Ituĩka Ceremony

As a preliminary to the *ituĩka* ceremonies, which were the ceremonies carried out in order to complete the handing over of power from one generation *riika* to the next, the leaders of the generation *riika* that was (p.1282) due to take over the government arranged for meetings to be called in every territorial unit. If the members agreed that the time had come to take over office, representatives of the new generation would request the leaders of the ruling generation to summon a representative meeting to discuss the question.

If the generation that was in power agreed to this, they informed the younger men that the first thing they had to do was to arrange for every male of the younger generation—from infants to grown men—to pay one ram or goat as the fee called *hako ya ituĩka* (the *ituĩka* fee). The representatives of the younger generation then went back to their respective territorial units and arranged for the *hako* fees of their area to be collected and handed over to the local elders of the ruling generation. This process of collecting and handing over *hako* fees might take six or eight months.

When the *hako* fees had all been paid, the representatives of the junior generation, again made arrangements to meet representatives of the ruling generation and this time they were told to arrange for every male of the junior generation to pay the *ndong'o* fee, which was again one ram and a goat from each male. The collecting and paying over of the *ndong'o* fees took another six to eight months to complete, and then the two lots of representatives met yet again, and the younger generation were told to arrange for the payment of *mbũri cia irua* (goats or sheep for the right to conduct initiation ceremonies).

When these *irua* fees had also been paid, the representatives of the two generations met yet again, and the younger generation was told to build temporary villages (*moraaro*) in each territorial unit. Here the two generations of that unit would meet for days at a time so that members of the ruling generation might instruct the younger generation in tradition and give them instructions as to the next procedure.

After a while, from each such territorial camp or centre, eight to twelve representatives were chosen to go to centres appointed by the ruling generation. There were about six such centres, at each of which a camp was built, and there the representatives from eight to ten territorial units joined together for further instruction. Office bearers were appointed for each camp (the duties of whom I was unable to learn), and more instructions were given. Then from each such central camp the representatives chose delegates from among themselves—who had to include the various office bearers. These delegates went to a big central camp for the whole of South Kikuyu territory at Ting'ang'a. Here was built an immense hut called *thingira ya ituĩko* (the *ituĩka* men's hut), and round it were temporary living huts for all the delegates and office bearers, together with other

accommodation (p.1283) for the office bearers and leaders of the ruling generation that was about to retire.

At this Ting'ang'a camp the main *ituĩka* ceremonies for South Kikuyu were conducted over a considerable period of time. The details have not been made known and I therefore cannot give them, but from scraps of conversation, I believe that the ceremonials included ritual sex acts carried out on an open field by a specially selected elder or office bearer of the ruling generation with his senior wife, and in the presence of all the assembled delegates. The ceremonies also included ritual dances, sacrifices, and the ceremonial blowing of war horns. Meanwhile, the representatives of each divisional camp (representing eight to ten territorial units), other than those who had been sent on to Ting'ang'a, remained at these camps.

From Ting'ang'a, representatives of both the new and the retiring generation travelled to a place called *Mũthaka* in Central Kikuyu country, north of the Chania River, where they performed the ceremony of "plucking the tail hair (*mũkore*)" from the mythical beast Ndamathia (believed to be an immense water serpent which lived in deep pools on the Mathioya River). The full details of what happened on this occasion were only known to those who took part in that ceremony as representatives of South and Central Kikuyu, and all that was common knowledge is that the Ndamathia had to be enticed out of the deep pool in which it lived by the offering of a live girl dressed in all her finery, and covered in castor oil to make her so slippery that the Ndamathia could not retain its hold on her and she could be rescued. While the Ndamathia was engrossed in stalking the girl to the accompaniment of war horn music, certain elders plucked the *mũkore* from its tail. The significance of this is not clear, but what Routledge (1910) records from his informants in Nyeri district is definitely not true; the *ituĩka* was not a kind of organised snake worship. After the *mũkore* had been successfully plucked, the representatives of South Kikuyu and Central Kikuyu returned to Ting'ang'a and further ceremonies took place which brought the *ituĩka* to an end.

When the *ituĩka* was over (a process which took several years), the new generation took office and all members of the senior generation retired from public life. They no longer conducted the religious life of people, they no longer were responsible for initiation ceremonies, and they no longer controlled the judicial courts. Certain of the more active members, however, paid the requisite fees; "moved down", and joined the younger generation, acting as their guides, instructors, and advisers in all matters, until the younger generation "learned the ropes" of their new duties.

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It must be kept in mind that the information given to me about the *ituĩka* and to Kikuyu authors writing at the same time (1939), may have been deliberately falsified by our informants to prevent us from publishing the true facts before our generation as a whole had paid the appropriate fees. In South Kikuyu alone there were probably aboout 40,000 male members of the Mũirũngũ generation in 1939, and every one of them would have had to pay the mbũri ya hako, the mbũri ya ndong'o, and the mbũri ya irua, or a total of about 120,000 goats and rams, before being entitled to the truth about the ituĩka rites and ceremonies. In terms of 1939 valuations, these animals represented £150,000 sterling, which would have been divided among the 7,000 to 8,000 living members of the Mwangi generation as a retiring fee or pension.

The *ituĩka* was the last but one of the rites de passage that a man passed through, the last one being death, at which point he joined his ancestors in the world of departed spirits.

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Botanical Appendix
The Trees and other Plants used by the Kikuyu

Dr Leakey's Original Preface, 1939

The list of trees and other plants used by the Kikuyu which is recorded in this Appendix, together with a summary of the uses which were made of these various plants, is not in any way exhaustive. It will, however, give some indication of the extent to which the Kikuyu made use of the flora of their country

I am deeply indebted to Mr P. R. O. Bally, botanist of the Coryndon Memorial Museum, Nairobi, and to my brother, Mr D. G. B. Leakey, who is an Assistant Conservator of Forests in Kenya, for helping to identify and supply the scientific names for the trees and other plants listed.

In some cases I have unfortunately been unable to obtain flowers of the plants, and have therefore been unable to get them identified. Occasionally the Kikuyu apply the same name to a variety of plants which are of different species, or even of different genera and families. This is more particularly true of plants used for magical purposes, where the different plants grouped under the same name are regarded as having the same magical properties, and although recognised as being different and distinct, are nevertheless classed together for convenience.

Note by Mrs G. S. B. Beecher, 1975

I have been able to identify some of the plants that Dr Leakey had still not identified, though not all. My thanks are due to those who helped me to do so. However, there is some uncertainty, as the members of Dr Leakey's original committee are no longer alive, the old names are dying out, and there is sometimes confusion about which plant is referred to in this book. The Kikuyu names, being local names, and not botanical ones, are, as Dr Leakey has pointed out, sometimes used for several plants. *I would therefore ask readers not to eat the fruit or leaves of wild plants mentioned here as being edible without first checking most carefully.*

p.1287
Botanists at the East African Herbarium have been consulted in connection with this work, as have T. G. Benson's *Kikuyu-English Dictionary*, and Dale and Greenway's book, *Kenya Trees and Shrubs*. Kikuyu names from these sources, however, could be names used in Central or North Kikuyu. It has not been possible to chech this, so there may be a few names included here which are not normally used in South Kikuyu.

Notes for the User of this Appendix

It will be noted that the Botanical Appendix has been organised alphabetically into families, followed by a section on unidentified plants. Under each family the Kikuyu names for all plants known to belong to that family ar**e** listed in the

following order: *a, b, c, e, g, h, i, ĩ, k, m, mb, n, nd, ng, ng', nj, ny, o, r, t, th, u, ũ, w, y*. To find the botanical name of any given plant, it is necessary, therefore, to refer first to the Botanical Index at the front of this appendix and find the family in which it appears.

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Classes and Families

ALGAE

Gacenga (Unidentified algae)

Yellow or reddish *algae* that grow in stagnant water.

1. These *algae* were used as a treatment for cattle suffering from rinderpest.
2. They were used in making red dye for painting bark shields.

Note: Dr Leakey used *gacenga* also for rinderpest itself. T. G. Benson likewise uses *gacenga* as a name for this disease, but calls the algae, the medicine, and the dye just *cenga*.

LICHENES

Mareru (Lichens of various kinds)

There were no special uses. T. G. Benson says that mosses, ferns, and orchids hanging from a tree, as well as lichens, are all called *mareru* (cf. *nderu*, beard).

PTER1DOPHYTA

Rũthirũ (*Pteridium aquilinum* (L.) Kuhn)

Bracken. Bracken is common in Kenya at altitudes of 5,000 ft or more where there is good rainfall.

1. Bracken fern was always used as a thatching material under the grass thatch.
2. Bracken was commonly used in building up the "body" of both the women's and the children's beds.
3. Bracken leaves were used to strain sugar-cane juice when making beer.
4. A frond of this plant was used in preparing the magic powder known as *kĩoho*.
5. A frond of this plant was an ingredient of the magic powder known as *ikũnja*.

Rũthirũthirũ (*Adiantum poiretii* Wikstr. *Asplenium praemorsum* Sw. *Cyathea manniana* Hook, (a tree fern). Also many other ferns)

Ferns. Ferns of many sorts are common in Kikuyu country, especially along water courses. Tree ferns, however, grow only in mountain forests, and are to be found in valleys on the Aberdare Range and on Mount Kenya.

There were no special uses.

GYMNOSPERMAE

Cupressaceae

Mũtarakwa (*Juniperus procera* Endl.)

Cedar, or African Pencil Cedar. The African Pencil Cedar, not a true cedar, is the largest juniper in the world, and its timber, which is resistant to termites, is of major economic importance. It is widely distributed in the drier highland forests between 3,500 and 9,500 ft.

1. The wood was used for making *mĩhĩrĩgo* (planks) for building huts.
2. The bark was used for making torches when smoking bees in order to take the honey.
3. It was used for both the male and the female elements of the fire drill.

Podocarpaceae

Mũthengera (*Podocarpus gracilior* Pilger
Podocarpus milanjianus Rendle)

Podo, or East African Yellow Wood. A tall tree found in drier highland forest from 4,000 to 9,000 ft. It produces a high grade soft wood used in joinery.

1. The roots were used in a treatment for chest complaints.

DICOTYLEDONS

Acanthaceae

Coco (*Hypoestes aristata* (Vahl) Rocm. and Schult.
Dyschoriste sp.)

1. The stem and leaves of this plant were commonly used in building up the "body" of both the woman's and children's beds.
2. The leaves were put on the fire in the ceremony of *gwakĩria irio* to make a sweet-smelling smoke.
3. Bits of root and stem were made into sweet-smelling beads to be worn by girls after initiation.
4. The leaves and stems were used in the *ndahĩkio* purification ceremony.
5. The leaves were used in the *kũruga nyũngũ* purification ceremony.
6. The leaves were an ingredient of the magic powder called *ng'ondu*.

Cf. *Coco Mũirũ*, *Rhamphicarpa*, Scrophulariaceae.

Gĩtũũhia (*Hypoestes verticillaris* (L.f.) R. Br.)

A herb. This herb grows in grassy places and has spikes of white flowers.

1. The leaves, stems, and roots of this plant were used as an ingredient of the magic powder called *ikũnja*.

Kanyanja (*Thunbergia*, all the climbing or creeping species). Also called *Nyanja* or *Njanja*.

A herb. The most common variety found in Kikuyu country (*Thunbergia alata Sims*) has orange flowers with dark centres, and is often called "Black-eyed Susan".

1. The leaves and stems were used to cure disorders in goats and sheep.
2. The leaves were used in a mixture to cure gall sickness in goats and sheep.

3. The stem was used to tie the bunches of leaves in the ceremony of *ndahĩkio*, a form of ceremonial purification.

Muunjuga-iria (1) (*Ruttya fruticosa* Lindau)
Note: This identification is from T. G. Benson.
Cf. *Muunjuga-iria* (2), *Clerodendrum*, Verbenaceae
Mũbirũ Mweru, *Vangueria* or *Pavetta*, Rubiaceae.

Mũcũgũcũgũ (1) *Dyschoriste thunbergiiflora* (S. Moore) Lindau)
Note: This identification is from Dale and Greenway.
Cf. *Mũcũgũcũgũ* (2), *Indigofera*, Papilionaceae.

Numa (1) (*Dyschoriste radicans* Nees)
Cf. *Numa* (2), *Trifolium*, Papilionaceae
Numa (3), *Spermacoce*, Rubiaceae.

Alangiaceae

Mũgaithu (1) (*Alangium chinense* (Lour.) Harms.)
A tree about 30 ft high, with soft, light-weight wood.
1. This wood was regarded as especially suitable for making cattle troughs, the frames of sword sheaths, and wooden arm ornaments, etc.
Note: This name has also been said to refer to *Peddiea volkensii* (Thymeleaceae), and although this would not have a trunk big enough to use for making a cattle trough, its wood would be quite suitable for making the frames of sword sheaths, and wooden arm ornaments.

Amaranthaceac

Mũgwata-ng'ondu (1) or *Mwata-ng'ondu* (*Cyathula schimperana* Moq.)
Also called *Kĩramata*. The mass of white, felt-like blossom is called *Maramata*.
Mũgwata-ng'ondu means literally, "the plant that catches the sheep", which refers to its burrs, and both these names, *mũgwata-ng'ondu* and *kĩramata*, are used for several different plants.

There is no mention of the uses of *Cyathula schimperana* in this book.

Cf. *Mũgwata-ng'ondu* (2), *Cynoglossum*, Boraginaceae
Mũgwata-ng'ondu (3), *Dichrocephala*, Compositae
Mũgwata-ng'ondu (4), *Caucalis*, Umbelliferae.

Mũtegenye (*Achyranthes aspera* L.
Cyathula cylindrica Moq.)

Achyranthes aspera is a herb with long, pinkish spikes of flowers whose fruits stick to one's clothes. *Cyathula cylindrica* has greyish-yellow spikes.
1. A drink made from *mũtegenye* roots was given as a mild purgative to travellers when they returned from a long journey.
2. It was an antidote for malaria.

Terere (*Amaranthus* spp., including
Amaranthus lividus L.)
1. It was recognised as a weed (*ria*).
2. The leaves were used as spinach.
3. The leaves and stems were used in the *ndahĩkio* ceremony of purification.
4. The leaves were used in the treatment of measles.

Anacardiaceae

Karoco (*Anacardium occidentale* L.)
Cashew nut.
1. The juice was used in the tattooing process called *kuoro mĩokia*.
Mũtheerũ (*Rhus longipes* Engl.)
1. The seeds were used to make the beads called *mai-a-hare*.
Mũthigiũ (*Rhus vulgaris* Meikle
Rhus natalensis Krauss)
A bush or small tree.

1. The leaves were used to lay meat upon when a slaughtered animal was cut up·
2. The leaves were used to prepare a treatment for the disease called *kĩrũmati* that affected women after childbirth, (after-pains of childbirth).

Annonaceae

Ndonga or *Mũtonga* (*Uvaria* sp.)

A shrub.

1. The powdered roots were an antidote for internal poison.
2. The roots were an antidote for snakebite.
3. The powdered roots mixed with water were used to induce spasms if labour was difficult or if the afterbirth would not come away.

Note: Dale and Greenway give *mũtonga* as *Uvariodendron anisatum* Verdcourt in the same family.

Apocynaceae

Mũkawa (1) (*Carissa edulis* (Forsk.) Vahl)

A very thorny, scrambling shrub.

1. *Carissa edulis* was much used in making the fence of felled trees round a fortified village because of its thorns. (*Mũkawa* (2) has no thorns.)
2. The roots were used to make a tonic at meat feasts.
3. The berries were eaten when ripe.

Cf. *Mũkawa* (2), *Mystroxylon*, Celastraceae.

Mũricũ (*Acokanthera friesiorum* Markgr.
Acokanthera longiflora Stapf.)

1. The wood was used to make spear handles and shafts.
2. The juices of the wood and bark were extracted by boiling and used to make an arrow poison.

Mũũgũ wa Mũnyatĩ (*Landolphia* sp.)

A creeper.

1. Stems of this creeper were commonly used in making the hurdle-work doors of huts.
2. The creepers were used to fix beehives to the hanging sticks on which they were suspended.
3. The creepers were used make winnowing trays (*itarũrũ*) and baskets of the *gĩtiti* and *rũgara* types.
4. The roots were used in the treatment of the diseases called *mũthiori* (gonorrhoea and bilharzia).

Mũũgũ wa Nyakamwe (1) or *Mũũgũ wa Inakamwe* (*Landolphia* sp.)

Also called *Mũnganga*. A woody, climbing plant.

1. The stems of this creeper were used to tie the hoops used in hut building, as it was much stronger than bark-string or cord.
2. The stems were commonly used in constructing the hurdle-work doors of huts.
3. The creepers were used to tie beehives to the hanging sticks by which they were suspended.
4. The creepers were used to make winnowing trays and baskets of the *gĩtiti* and *rũgara* types.
5. The roots were used to prepare a powerful sexual stimulant or aphrodisiac.

Note: Dr Leakey identified *mũũgH wa nyakamwe* as a *Landolphia* (Apocynaceae) but in the East African Herbarium it is listed as a *Hippocratea* (Celastraceae).

Cf. *Mũũgũ wa Nyakamwe* (2), Celastraceae family.

Mwerere (*Tabernaemontana holstii* K. Sch.
Tabernaemontana johnstonii (Stapf) Pichon)

A tree with thick foliage and white flowers, and with leaves and stems that exude a white latex.

1. The latex was used as bird lime.

Araliaceae

Mũtatĩ (*Polyscias kikuyuensis* Summerhayes)

Mũtatĩ. A tall tree which grows in the wetter highland forests. The timber is a white softwood.

1. The wood was used to make beehives.
2. The wood, which is very light but not too soft, was usually chosen to make the hollow cylinders for mole traps.

Mũthaĩ (*Schefflera volkensii* Harms)

A forest tree or climber.

1. The bark was used to treat the skin disease in goats called *mũhare*.

Mwenyere (*Cussonia spicata* Thunb).

A striking looking tree, as its leaves grow in dense clusters at the ends of the branches, and the flower spikes are in heavy bunches. It grows from 5 000 7,000 ft.

1. The wood was used for making beehives.
2. This wood, being very light, was much used for making wooden ornaments such as *ndome*, and for mole traps.

Asclepiadaceae

Irigi (An unidentified member of this family).

A woody climber.

1. The wood was used to make the female component of the fire drill.
2. The wood was used in removing effects of the evil eye.
3. Beads of this wood were a charm against the evil eye.
4. Smoke of the dried wood was inhaled to cure a headache.

Mũcangarithi or *Mũkangarithi* or *Rũkangarithi* (*Gomphocarpus fruticosus* (L.) Ait. f.)

1. The bark yielded a valuable fibre for making cord and string.
2. The string made from this bark was used in magic ceremonies to make a necklace called *ngũbitũ*.

Mũhũkũũra (*Mondia whitei* (Hook, f.) Skeels)

A climber.

1. This wild plant was frequently cultivated because its sweet-scented roots were in great demand for making a magic powder and for sale to the Maasai tribe.
2. The roots of this plant were usually the sole ingredient of the magic powder called *rũthuko*.
3. The roots were used as an ingredient for the magic powder called *mũgoco*.

Mũimba-igũrũ (*Periploca linearifolia* Dill, and Rich.)

A climbing herb with a very large root-stock, which is common in Kikuyu and Kamba country.

1. The roots were used to make the female component of the fire drill.
2. The roots were used in certain ceremonies as *ngwaro* (rawhide stripe), instead of leather.
3. The roots were used to make special divining counters at the initiation of a medicine-man.
4. The roots were used as an ingredient in making the magic powder called *mũgokoro*.
5. The stems and leaves were used as ingredients in making the magic powder called *thenge*.
6. The roots were used in preparing a treatment for chest complaints.

Balsaminaceae

Mũraria (1) (*Impatiens eminii* Warb.)

A herb. It grows in the forest at the higher altitudes, 7,000 ft or above. Its **seed** pods pop and curl when touched.

1. *Mũraria* was used in magic ceremonies, especially when women were the patients.

Note: *Mũraria* (1) and *Mũraria* (2) were used in the same way.

Cf. *Mũraria* (2), *Pilea*, Urticaceae

Mũraria wa Kĩanda, *Peucedanum*, Umbellifcrae

Mũrana wa Rũgongo, *Caucalis*, Umbelliferae.

Basellaceae

Mũrerema (*Basella alba* L.)

A creeping or twining herb.

1. *Mũrerema* was used to make necklaces in certain magic rites, such as curing sterility in women.
2. The leaves were used as an ingredient of the magic powder called *ng'ondu*.
3. The leaves were used in the purification ceremony called *kũruga nyũngũ*.
4. The leaves and stems were put around the mouths of jars in which beer was brewing in connection with purification ceremonies.

Berberidaceae

Mũthuthi (1) (*Berberis holstii* Engl.)

Also called, in Benson's dictionary, *Mũkekenye*, *Mũkururi*, and *Mũkururu*. *Ngururu* may refer to the roots of *Mũkururu*, but see *Ngururu* in unidentified list.

1. The thorns were used in surgery.

Note: This identification is from T. G. Benson and Dale and Greenway; Dr Leakey merely gave *Mũthuthi* as *Maytenus undata*, Celastraceae.

Cf. *Mũthuthi* (2), *Maytenus*, Celastraceae
Mũthuthi (3), *Rhamnus*, Rhamnaceae
Ngururu, Unidentified.

Bignoniaceae

Mũratina (*Kigelia qfricana* (Lam.) Benth.
Kigelia aethiopum (Fenzl) Dandy)

The fruits of the *Mũratina* are called *Iratina* (sing. *Kĩratina*), but the slices used in beer-making are referred to merely as *Mĩratina* (sing. *Mũratina*).

Loofah tree, or German Sausage Tree. A tree with pendant racemes of maroon coloured flowers, and hanging fruits that look like German sausages.

1. The fruits of this tree were used for fermenting honey and sugar-cane beer.

Mũũũ (*Markhamia hildebrandtii* (Bak.) Sprague)

A tree with dark green leaves and yellow flowers; the seed pods are long, sometimes up to 2ft, and are slightly twisted. This tree was often polled, and new branches grew again quickly.

1. Cuttings of this tree were often used to mark boundaries between subdivisions of an estate, but not the boundaries between one estate and another.
2. Cuttings were planted in the *thome* (entrance) region of a homestead to provide shade.

Boraginaceae

Mũgwata-ng'ondu or *Mwata-ng'ondu* (2) (*Cynoglossum caeruleun* DC.
Cynoglossum geometricum Bak. and Wright
Cynoglossum lancellatum Forsk.)

Also called *Kĩramata*.

Herbs, often called Kenya Forget-me-nots, because of their similarity to that flower, though not true forget-me-nots. At altitudes of 7,000 ft and over *Cynoglossum caeruleum* sometimes makes whole hillsides look blue. Literally, *mũgwata ng'ondu* means, "the plant that catches the sheep", because its fruits are prickly burrs.

1. The leaves and stems were used in the *ndahĩkĩo* purification ceremonies
2. The leaves were rubbed on the hands in certain death ceremonies as a kind of preliminary purification.

Cf. *Mũgwata-ng'ondu* (l), *Cyathula*, Amaranthaceae
Mũgwata-ng'ondu (3), *Dichrocephala*, Compositae
Mũgwata-ng'ondu (4), *Caucalis*, Umbelliferae.

Mũhooru (1) (*Heliotropium indicum* L.)

A herb. For the uses of this plant see *Mũhooru* (3) *Pycnostachys*, Labiatae.

Cf. *Mũhooru* (2), *Plectranthus*, Labiatae
Mũhooru (3), *Pycnostachys*, Labiatae.

Mũkuũ (1) (*Cordia ovalis* DC.)

A smallish tree with rough leaves.

1. The leaves of this tree were commonly used as sandpaper, cf. *Mũkuũ* (2), *Ficus*, Moraceae.

Mũrembu (*Ehretia cymosa* Thonn. var. *sylvatica* (Guerke) Brenan)

A medium- sized tree.

1. The leaves were used to lay meat on when a slaughtered animal was being cut up.
2. The wood was considered especially suitable for making hanging sticks for suspending beehives.
3. The wood was especially suitable for the handles of bark shields.
4. The leaves were used in preparing the magic powder *ktoho*.
5. The leaves were used as an ingredient of the magic powder called *ngoma*.

Mũringa (*Cordia africana* Lam.)

A big shady timber tree, growing up to 70 or 80ft in forests, but shorter and more spreading in the open. It is periodically covered with white, rather crinkly flowers.

1. Cuttings of this tree were occasionally set as boundary plants instead of the crinum lily, *gĩtoka*.
2. Cuttings were planted in the *thome* (entrance) region of a homestead to provide shade.
3. The wood of this tree was used for making objects such as beehives, mortars, stools, and troughs.
4. The bark was used to make bark shields.
5. The bark was used for rough string when it was wanted in a hurry.
6. The roots were used in preparing a treatment for chest complaints.

7. The bark was chewed to relieve a sore throat, coughing, ulcerated throat, and enlarged uvula.

Burseraceae

Mũkũngũgũ (*Commiphora zimmermannii* Engl.
(*C. missionis* Chiov.))

Though commonly seen as a small tree where planted in gardens and **homesteads,** this tree sometimes grows up to 70ft, according to Dale and Greenway in *Kenya Trees and Shrubs*.

1. Cuttings of this tree were often used to mark the boundaries of sub-divisions of an estate, but not to mark the boundaries between one estate and another.
2. A cutting of this tree was commonly planted in the centre of the courtyard of a homestead. Bunches of sweet potato vine for sheep and goats to eat were hung from its branches.
3. Cuttings were commonly planted in the *thome* (entrance) area of a homestead to provide shade.
4. Cuttings of this wood were used to make the poles to hold a granary in position on its platform.
5. Cuttings were used to make living supports for yam vines.
6. The wood of this tree was used to make roasting platforms for meat.
7. The wood was regarded as especially suitable for making cattle troughs.
8. This wood, being very light, was much used for making wooden ornaments such as boys' wooden dance shields (*ndome*), worn on the arm, and also for making bull-roarers.

Caesalpiniaceae

Mũbage (*Caesalpinia decapetala* (Roth) Alston)

Mbage, the seeds of *mũbage*. The Mauritius Thorn. A native of Asia, but naturalised in East Africa for a very long time. A very prickly scandent shrub with pale yellow flowers that have an unpleasant smell.

1. This thorny plant was used to make live hedges round a homestead.
2. Seeds of *mũbage* (*mbage*) were sometimes used as "divining counters".

Mũbũthĩ (1) (Possibly *Caesalpinia volkensii* Harms, like *Mũcũthĩ* (1), but not fully identified)

1. The bark was used in preparing a palliative for elephantiasis.

Cf. *Mũbũthĩ* (2), *Fagar a*, Rutaceae
Mũcũthĩ (1), *Caesalpinia* below
Mũcũthĩ (2), *Fagara*, Rutaceae
Mũgũcwa, *Fagara* Rutaceae.

Mũcũthĩ (1) *Caesalpinia volkensii* Harms)

1. The roots were used to make a tonic consumed at meat feasts.
2. The roots were used in preparing a treatment for the diseases known as *mũthiori* (gonorrhoea and bilharzia).
3. The roots were used as an internal treatment for rheumatism.

Note: Today the leaves are still sometimes boiled to make an infusion, said to be good for malaria.

Cf. *Mũbũthĩ* (1), Caesalpiniaceae above
Mũbũthĩ (2), *Fagara*, Rutaceae
Mũcũthĩ (2), *Fagara*, Rutaceae
Mũgũcwa, *Fagara*, Rutaceae.

Mũtanda-mbogo (1) (*Pterolobium stellatum* (Forsk.) Brenan)

Also called *Mũthagurũ*. A woody climber densely covered with prickles. The flowers are cream-coloured, but the creeper is most conspicuous when it is in fruit as the fruits are winged and a brilliant red.

1. This thorny creeper was encouraged to grow over the fence of felled trees at the back of a fortified village to make it impenetrable.
2. Thick stems of this creeper were used for hoops in the construction of hut roofs, and for tying in the *mũhĩrĩgo* planks.
3. A large plant of this thorny bush was often improvised into a temporary shelter by cutting away the undergrowth.
4. The bark of the roots was used to make the magic powder called *ũũmũ*.

Cf. *Mũtanda-mbogo* (2), *Scutia*, Rhamnaceae.

Mwĩnũ (*Cassia didymobotrya* Fres.)

Mĩĩnũ, plural of *Mwĩnũ*.

A small tree or large shrub with spikes of yellow flowers which look from a distance like lighted candles. It has dark-coloured bracts. The leaves are poisonous.

1. The wood was used to make hoops for the "shooting the hoop" game.

Note: The old name for Nairobi, *Kĩĩnũ-inĩ*, means, "the place where there are many *mĩĩnũ* trees". This referred to a large group of them in Westlands, roughly where St. Mark's Church now stands.

Canellaceae

Mũthĩga (*Warburgia ugandensis* Sprague)

Thĩga, the fruit of the *Mũthĩga*. East African Greenheart. A tall timber tree, the wood of which polishes well, but is not resistant to termites.

1. The bark was used for a tonic consumed at meat feasts.
2. The fruit was eaten in times of food shortage.
3. The wood was used to make special charcoal for smelting and iron work.
4. The bark was used as an ingredient in the magic powder called *mũgũthũkũ*.
5. The bark was used in preparing a treatment for dysentery.

Capparaceae

Gathandĩka (1) (*Maerua triphylla* A. Rich. var. *johannis* (Volkens and Gilg) De Wolf)

Gathandĩka is given as another name for *Mũtumburu* (*Maerua*, Capparaceae (by Dale and Greenway and by T. G. Benson. This, however, has been disputed.

Cf. *Gathandĩka* (2), *Psychotria*, Rubiaceae
Mũtumburu, Capparaceae below.

Mũnunga-mai (*Ritchiea albersii* Gilg)

A small tree or shrub whose wood stinks when burnt.

1. Its wood was used for making ear-blocks for initiates in their period of seclusion in the initiation lodge.

Cf. Kamũnunga-mai, Rubiaceae.

Mũtumburu (*Maerua triphylla* A. Rich, var. *johannis* (Volkens and Gilg) De Wolf)

A small tree or shrub.

1. The roots were used in preparing an internal treatment for rheumatism.

Note: T. G. Benson and Dale and Greenway both identify *gathandĩka* as *Maerua triphylla*, like *mũtumburu*, but this has been disputed.

Cf. *Gathandĩka* (1), Capparaceae above
Gathandĩka (2), *Psychotria*, Rubiaceae.

Celastraceac

Mũirũngi (1) (*Catha edulis* (Vahl) Endl.)

Somali Tea or Miraa. A smallish tree with hard wood that polishes well, but it is chiefly known for the stimulant properties of its leaves.

1. The roots were used to make a tonic consumed at meat feasts.
2. The roots were used in preparing a treatment for the diseases known as *mũthiori* (gonorrhoea and bilharzia).
3. The roots were used in an internal treatment for rheumatism.
4. The leaves were used as a stimulant.

Cf. *Mũirũngi* (2), *Casearia* Flacourtiaceae.

Mũkawa (2) (*Mystroxylon aethiopicum* (Thunb.) Loes.
Cassine aethiopica Thunb.)

A shrub. It has edible berries, but no thorns.

Note: See *Mũkawa* (1)—*Carissa*, Apocynaceae—for its uses, but it would not have been as useful as *Carissa edulis* in a *kĩhingo* fence due to its lack of thorns.

Mũrigi or *Rũrigi* (*Maytenus acuminata* (L.f.) Loes.)

A small tree growing in the shade of thick forest.

1. The wood was used to make spear hafts and handles.
2. The wood was used to make the ceremonial staves of council elders.
3. Bits of the root were smoked like a cigarette to cure headaches.

Note: The *mũ*-prefix is the normal one for a tree and the alternate form, *rũrigi*, with the *rũ*-prefix, suggests something long, and is probably in reference to the branches of this tree being used for elders' staves.

Mũtanga (*Elaeodendron buchananii* (Loes.) Loes.
(*Cassine buchananii* Loes.))

Itanga is a leaf or piece of *Mũtanga*. A tall tree growing in both forest and savannah, the leaves of which are poisonous to stock. The young trees are often covered by gregarious caterpillars living in webs.

1. The wood was used for making wooden snuff boxes.
2. The powdered bark was used as an antiseptic and disinfectant on wounds.
3. The bark was used to make a very potent disinfectant powder for sores that were festering.

Mũthithiũi or *Mũthithioi* (*Maytenus undata* (Thunb.) Blakelock)

Mũthithioi is the form of the name given by T. G. Benson. A small spineless tree with hard, red wood.

1. The wood of this tree was regarded as especially suitable for making the wooden ear ornaments called *ndebe*.

Note: *Mũthuthi* (2), below, has also been identified as *Maytenus undata*, and this may be a variation of the name *mũthithiũi;* but *Maytenus undata* does not have thorns.

Mũthuthi (2) (*Maytenus* sp.)

1. This wood was regarded as suitable for making ear ornaments called *ndebe*.
2. The wood was used for making snuff boxes.
3. The thorns were used to pierce ears, and for making spinning tops.
4. The thorns were used in the special ceremony of initiating a medicine-man.
5. The thorns were used in the preparation of most charms.
6. The thorns were used to stitch wounds.

Note: *Mũthithiũi* has also been classified as *Maytenus undata*, but *M. undata* does not have thorns. Dale and Greenway give *Mũthuthi* as *Maytenus ovata*.

Cf. *Mũthithiũi*, Celastraceae above
Mathuthi (1), *Berberis*, Berberidaceae
Mũthuthi (3), *Rhamnus*, Rhamnaceae.

Glossary

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